EMERGENCE OF THE SECOND VIOLIN IN THE CLASSICAL STRING QUARTETS OF HAYDN, MOZART, AND BEETHOVEN

by

Sungkyung Sarah Kim

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Doctoral Committee

_____
Roman Ivanovitch, Research Director

_____
Mimi Zweig, Chair

_____
Brenda Brenner

_____
Alexander Kerr

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Introduction

The initial idea for my research stemmed from some questions that have troubled me throughout my violin career: Why is the second violin part of certain early string quartets easier than the first violin part, and frequently inferior to it, musically and technically? Why is it that only a few violists and cellists are willing to play the early quartets of Haydn, Mozart, and even Beethoven? What was the real actual reason behind the commonly heard remark, "He (or she) will make a good *second* violinist"? These burning questions led me to extensive research on topics such as the origins of the string quartet, social changes within and outside the realm of music, performers and performing circumstances, and compositional developments. After much reading and listening, it was clear to me that there were no simple answers to my questions, but rather, the why's and how's involved much broader issues.

In the beginning, I focused on collecting evidence to test my theory that the second violin should have been an equal voice to the first violin in a democratic and fair string-quartet "society." However, I was turning a blind eye towards the much more critical issue of what was genuinely involved in making a true, great Classical string quartet. My notion of a democratic string quartet was, as it turned out, an ideal that had to be re-learned and redefined. From there, I needed to go back to the beginning and ask a foundational question, "What constitutes a good string quartet?"

There are many plausible answers to this question: the unity of the four players, the individuality of each player, the interplay of thematic material among the parts, etc. However, in the eighteenth century and even into the nineteenth century, the most common answers to the question might well have been different from our present taste. As Paul Griffith points out, "the

string quartet is at once a medium and a genre, even a form," and is unique in having such multiple associations.[1] Whereas the predominant rhetoric today about string quartets is concerned with how the four voices are played out so that there is an equality of contribution from them, the best-known quartets from the Classical era do not quite follow the equal-participation ideology. Instead, they show a strong preference towards music centered on the first violin.

This paper looks at the origin and history of the string quartet through the eyes of the second violin, focusing on the years 1761–1810, because it is during this time that the role of the second violin was most unstable, taking on many different roles and identities. The Classical string quartets by Joseph Haydn, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, and Ludwig van Beethoven are studied principally to exemplify the extraordinary spectrum of Classical string quartets: from first-violin-centric to a gradual transformation into truly conversational music with a focus on redefining the identity of the second violin.

1. Paul Griffiths, *The String Quartet* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1983), 7.

Chapter 1: The Origin of the String Quartet

Instrumental Chamber Music in Eighteenth-Century Europe

For much of the eighteenth century, music was performed in one of three venues: the church, the theater, and the court or chamber. These venues represented the "three functions of music: to enhance worship in church (*ecclesiasticus*), to heighten the drama in the theater (*theatralis*), and to provide entertainment in the court or chamber (*cubicularis*)."[2] Even though it would not be an overstatement that the venue prescribed the type of music performed, chamber music also denoted music requiring higher technical demands than that of the church or theater music. In his celebrated musical dictionary, the *Musikalisches Lexikon* of 1802, the important theorist Heinrich Koch confirms the meaning of eighteenth-century chamber music as belonging to the royal princes and differentiates it from church music where religious emotions were pervasive and theater music, where moral emotions were displayed.[3] He continues:

> chamber music…was intended only to serve the private pleasures of the reigning princes or of the courts, and since besides, it is only performed in a room and with a few instruments, the result of all these circumstances was that the older composers took greater pains with the art products for the chamber … and assumed on the part of the performer greater technical finish than they considered needful in compositions for the church, or for the theater, partly on account of the size of the building, partly also on account of the larger number of performers for each part, etc.[4]

2. Mara Parker, in her book, *The String Quartet, 1750–1797: Four Types of Musical Conversation* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 7, confirms the meaning of eighteenth-century chamber music based on the writings of Johann Walter (*Musicalisches Lexikon*, 1732), Meinrado Spiess (*Tractatus Musicus Compositorio-Practicus*, 1745), and Heinrich Koch (*Musickalisches Lexikon*, 1802).

3. Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Musikalisches Lexikon: Faksimile-Reprint der Ausgabe Frankfurt/Main 1802* (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 2001), cols. 820–21; see also Ruth Rowen, "Some 18th-Century Classifications of Musical Style," *Musical Quarterly* 33, no.1 (January 1947): 91.

4. Ibid.

While the division of musical styles remained among the three venues, the steady popularization of private performances of chamber music, as opposed to public concerts, differentiated the type of music played more than whether the music was sacred or secular.[5] Furthermore, the style of music composed for public concerts by professional performers was quite different from the less dense and rather simple music written and performed by amateurs in private settings.[6] Typically, royal courts or aristocratic patrons sponsored a composer and, sometimes, even a small ensemble, to provide entertainment in their domestic locales. In other words, while formal symphonies, overtures, and operas dominated in public performances, private and domestic concerts for smaller ensembles continued to thrive. Unfortunately, there are few surviving documents about such concerts, their nature being necessarily informal and private.

Furthermore, as expenses for public orchestral performances and even private large ensemble performances at court became increasingly burdensome, many patrons restricted their largesse to a few musicians, primarily a violinist and a composer. Eventually, this compact nature of chamber music—that is, music for one to a few players requiring relatively less expense and minimal logistical maneuvering—allowed for ordinary households to maintain informal entertainment at home. Depending on the circumstances, the number of amateur players and professionals in a group might differ, but it was common to have a professional first violinist who could lead the group in reading more challenging, yet approachable music. The patrons themselves were often amateur violinists or cellists, and composers sometimes wrote music with specific people in mind. For example, a string quartet might consist of a professional first violin,

5. Charles Rosen, *The Classical Style: Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven*, Exp. ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 45.

6. Rosen (op. cit., 45–46) mentions keyboard music as well as sonatas, duos, and trios being stylistically informal versus the tightly organized symphonies and overtures that were written for large ensembles.

an amateur second violin, the composer himself on the viola, and an amateur cello, who could also be the music's commissioner. An account of Charles Burney, a famous English music historian and musical traveler, recreates a private musical moment from September 4, 1772:

> Between the vocal parts of this delightful concert, we had some exquisite quartets, by Haydn, executed in the utmost perfection; the first violin by M. Startzler [Starzer], who played the *Adagios* with uncommon feeling and expression; the second violin by M. Ordonetz [Ordoñez]; count Brühl played the tenor[7] [viola], and M. Weigel [Weigl], an excellent performer on the violoncello, the base.[8]

The string quartet as a medium was so economical that it gradually gained ground as the most sought-after private or home entertainment. As a genre, the string quartet allowed a style in between the tightly wrought discipline of symphonic music and the simplified, lighter mood of other prevalent chamber music, such as that written for keyboard, duos, and trios. By the turn of the nineteenth century, string quartets were considered the quintessential form of chamber music, and the impact they had on the musical scene of the Classical period was enormous. Therefore, delineating the history of the string quartet from its origins to high Classical maturity is a complex but necessary task in examining the context in which the development of the second violin took place.

Predecessors to the String Quartet

There is no denying that the last few decades of the eighteenth century, while being critical for the development of the string quartet genre, were quite disorderly. During its first few

7. In the seventeenth century, the viola was available in several different sizes, the larger ones being generally called "tenor violin" or just "tenor." The larger ones gradually became extinct for practical reasons and, through time, the smaller instruments replaced the larger ones and came to be known as "viola." See Robin Stowell, "Developments in Instruments, Bows and Accessories," in *The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet,* ed. Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 23, and Ephraim Segerman, "The Name 'Tenor Violin,'" *Galpin Society Journal* 48 (1995): 181–87.

8. James Webster, "Towards a History of Viennese Chamber Music in the Early Classical Period," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 27, no. 2 (summer 1974): 234.

decades, the string quartet was intensely cultivated and massively produced by composers from different regions of Europe. As with the birth of any musical genre, the evolution of the string quartet through the multiple transforming stages took many decades to sort itself out and crystallize into "the standard" Classical string quartet we know today. Although many musicians and scholars consider Haydn's set of six quartets, Op. 33 (1781), or even his quartets, Op. 20, to be the defining starting point for the genre, close to one thousand other string quartets were written before or around the same time as Op. 33, twenty-eight of which belong to Haydn himself.[9]

Any chamber music enthusiast has heard of the saying, "Haydn is the father of the string quartet." Anyone who has done any reading on the history of the string quartet is likely to have come across the famous story about Haydn and his "creation" of the genre. The story, retold by Haydn's early biographer, Georg August Griesinger, begins on the night when Haydn, then working for Baron Carl Joseph Fürnberg, was asked by the baron to compose music for the four amateur players available at the time: two violinists, one violist, and one cellist.[10]

> A certain Baron Nurnberg had a country seat in Weinzirl, several stages from Vienna. From time to time he invited his pastor, his manager, Haydn, and Albrechtsberger (a brother of the famous contrapuntist, who played the violoncello) to make a little music. Nurnberg asked Haydn to compose something that these four amateurs could perform. Haydn … took him up on it, and so originated his first quartet….[11]

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9. Rosen's book, *The Classical Style,* begins his discussion of string quartets with Haydn's Op. 33, without any mention of his earlier quartets. Nancy November, "Instrumental Arias or Sonic Tableaux: 'Voice' in Haydn's String Quartets Opp. 9 and 17," *Music & Letters* 89, no. 3 (August 2008): 347, also discusses how the "essential features of the so-called 'Classical' string quartet have been thought to arise at the earliest with Op. 20 (1772), but more usually in Op. 33 (1781)." See also Parker, *String Quartet*, 3–6, which has further discussion on the debate by prominent musicologists—among them, Ludwig Finscher, Roger Hickman, and James Webster—about the string quartet's origins. For a list and taxonomy of these thousand or so quartets, see Parker, *String Quartet*, 75–278.

10. Floyd K. Grave and Margaret G. Grave, *The String Quartets of Joseph Haydn* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 10.

11. Georg August Griesinger, *Biographische Notizen über Joseph Haydn* (Leipzig, 1810): 16, quoted and translated in James Webster, "The Bass Part in Haydn's Early String Quartets," *Musical Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (July 1977): 391.

Although the accuracy of the story remains questionable, and its date almost too early to be realistic—Haydn would have been only eighteen years old—its widespread renown has given it mythical status. A written account of an event or incident can fluidly and freely romanticize the reality and grow into legend over time.

It could certainly be said that Haydn is the father of the string quartet by the sheer number of his output in the genre, the influence of his quartets on other composers, and the continuing demand for performance, for which reasons he will rightfully remain at the top of the family tree of string quartets. Nevertheless, despite Haydn's unquestionable contribution in defining and popularizing the string quartet genre, it is critical to acknowledge that the creative process of attaining greatness rarely occurs from desolate nothingness. One does not create a musical genre from scratch by chance, without having been influenced by earlier music. Further recognition and credit should be given to those composers before and during Haydn's time who contributed to the proliferation of string quartets and their contribution in disseminating the genre.

Music for Four Instruments

As early as the Renaissance, music for four instruments existed in places such as Italy and England.[12] Here, before going any further, it should be noted that the music for four instruments does not include music with three instruments plus a default basso continuo consisting of harpsichord with cello or viola da gamba. For example, Arcangelo Corelli's church sonatas are scored for two violins and basso continuo. Although there could have been four

12. See David Wyn Jones, "The Origins of the Quartet," in *The Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet,* ed. Robin Stowell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 178, for a list of composers such as Gregori Allegri (1582–1652), Adriano Banchieri (1568–1634), Andrea Gabrieli (1533–1585), John Jenkins (1592–1678), Christopher Simpson (*ca.* 1605–1669), and Henry Purcell (1659–1695).

instruments playing this music, it is not considered part of the string quartet genre since the bass instrument fundamentally doubled the basso continuo, and other continuo instruments were common (e.g., lute and bassoon). Then in the early eighteenth century, Alessandro Scarlatti (1660–1725) published a set of six works titled *Sonat[e] à Quattro per Due Violini, Violetta e Violoncello senza Cembalo*, written exclusively for a string quartet without a keyboard instrument. Although these works are stylistically far different from what scholars consider to be early string quartet music—with prominent Baroque features such as consistent dotted rhythms and imitative entrances—the fact that Scarlatti specifically indicated four string players without keyboard instrument is remarkable, since he was writing at a time when the continuo was ubiquitous.

The Divertimento

By the middle of the eighteenth century, different regions of Europe enjoyed varying types of what we can for convenience call the string quartet, "each of which reflected the needs of a particular group of people or locale."[13] The quartet's many distinct labels—divertimento, partita, serenade, notturno, and cassation among others—were an indication that the string quartet genre was in its formational stage.[14] Moreover, the development of publication heightened the confusion of nomenclature because string quartets appeared under these various titles, depending on where they were published. Paris was a forerunner in music publishing in eighteenth-century Europe, issuing several *thousand* string quartets during the second half of the eighteenth century.[15] Printed music was in greater demand in Paris than anywhere else in

13. Parker, *String Quartet*, 47.
14. Griffiths, *String Quartet*, 8.
15. Christina Bashford, "The String Quartet and Society," in *Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet*, 5.

Europe; and in consequence, instrumental music flourished in public and private concerts.[16] In contrast, Vienna was slow to adapt to printed music for the public. Scores and parts were difficult to come by, unless one could afford the costly manuscript copies. It was not until 1778 that the Viennese arts and maps publishing firm Artaria began printing sheet music, making it readily available to the public in that city.[17]

These varying local labels have added to the difficulty for musicologists to pinpoint "the work" or "the composer" who set the precedent for the string quartet. Even though the string quartet as a genre took many transforming stages to mature into what we recognize today as string quartets, many musicologists were inclined to set a standard for what a genuine Classical string quartet should be and then delved into the history to find their version of its "true" birth story. As Nancy November writes, "writers have privileged later works as the goals of an evolutionary process: essential features of the so-called 'Classical' string quartet have been thought to arise at the earliest with [Haydn's] Op. 20 (1772), but more usually in [Haydn's] Op. 33 (1781)."[18]

However, there are major disadvantages to this top-down approach. Music continuously metamorphosed over time from the Renaissance and Baroque eras to create a distinctive set of structures, formalities, tonal areas, and thematic developments by the Classical period. Having preconceived notions of the "True Classical Quartet" limits us to dismiss certain works of considerable caliber, in addition to ignoring the "various types of quartet, each of which can be

16. Parker, *String Quartet*, 32.
17. Webster, "Towards a History," 214.
18. Nancy November, "Instrumental Arias or Sonic Tableaux: 'Voice' in Haydn's String Quartets Opp. 9 and 17," *Music & Letters* 89, no. 3 (August 2008): 347.

related to and distinguished from each other."[19] Therefore, probing through history for the perfect Classical string quartet "fit" can be biased and unfair.[20]

While many books, essays, and even dissertations pinpoint to the divertimento as a firm predecessor to the string quartet, scholars such as Roger Hickman and Eve Meyer disagree. In an early article from 1980, Hickman categorizes these earlier *divertimenti a quattro* as a separate, but somewhat related genre to the string quartet.[21] Along the same lines, Eve Meyer, for instance, has argued for the separation of divertimento from the string quartet on the basis that "divertimento" was just a term for chamber music that could be played by "a small orchestra of fifteen to [as many as] twenty-five players."[22] Hickman and Meyer's binary distinction—pre-quartet versus Classical string quartet—are based on the orchestra-like style of composition of some of the string quartets from the mid-eighteenth century.[23] Hickman writes,

> the divertimento reflects a unity of conception which clearly separates it from the string quartet. Like the other "pre-quartet" genres (such as the sonata a quattro, sinfonia a quattro, concerto a quattro, etc.) the divertimento does not embody the three defining criteria of a "true" string quartet—obligatory solo performance, freedom from the basso continuo, and scoring for two violins, viola, and cello. Rather, the divertimento is essentially orchestral and could be played by either a large ensemble or soloists.[24]

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19. Parker, *String Quartet*, 5.

20. For a discussion, see Parker's *String Quartet,* pp. 279–282 where Parker argues, "Those who see the works of Haydn and Mozart as representing the norm, point not so much to their treatment of the voices, but the regularization of the four-movement sequence, the use of sonata form, and the inclusion of thematic development. These features then become benchmarks with which to compare all other quartets. In the process, those works do not conform are marginalized."

21. Roger Hickman, "The Nascent Viennese String Quartet," *Musical Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (April 1982): 210–12. Hickman argues that the music before the end of 1760s should be considered *divertimenti a quattro* and after that period as string quartets. He continues, "if we are to consider the works of the 1750s and 1760s as string quartets, then where do we draw the boundaries of genre? The resultant confusion would be compounded when other regional manifestations of the quartet are considered. As a result, the 'early history' of the genre would be *muddled* with numerous interpretations and candidates for the 'inventor' of the genre.… By limiting the genre to the later works, historians of the string quartet can focus on a definable repertory; thus a search for its 'father' … would be facilitated."

22. Parker, *String Quartet*, 14. See also pp. 13–18 for a detailed discussion of the arguments by Eve Meyer, Roger Hickman, and James Webster.

23. Hickman, "The Nascent," 207.

24. Roger Hickman, "Six Bohemian Masters of the String Quartet in the Late Eighteenth Century," (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1979), 13.

Despite their claims, however, it is difficult to imagine orchestral sounds in many string quartets from the late 1750s to early 1760s, especially those of Franz Xavier Richter or Luigi Boccherini. Interestingly, Haydn's own quartets up to and including Op. 20 are labeled "divertimento." Therefore, Hickman's exclusion of Op. 9 as a true string quartet confuses his binary categorization, also disregarding string quartets labeled "divertimentos" written by other composers.[25]

Hence, the most recent turns in the debate among musicologists, then, have in fact tended to produce arguments in favor of the evolutionary development of the genre and the inclusion of earlier divertimenti among string quartets after all. Nancy November writes that although published as divertimenti, Haydn's Opp. 9 and 17 are going through a "critical reappraisal" by musicologists such as William Drabkin and James Webster.[26] Webster, in support of the evolutionary theory, argues that the divertimento *a quattro* "was a string quartet in everything but name."[27]

Quartet Types

Different regions of Europe produced their own distinctive style of string quartet for domestic entertainment. In Germany, for example, *Hausmusik* was in fashion for mostly amateur musicians, accessible and simple in accordance with their level of fluency. It contained a "minimal amount of interplay between the instruments…[and] emphasized the first violin at the expense of the lower voices."[28] The most widespread compositions of *Hausmusik* were those

25. Hickman, "The Nascent," 212.
26. For a discussion, see November's "Instrumental Arias," 347–48.
27. Parker, *String Quartet*, 17.
28. Ibid., 48.

composed by Ignace Pleyel, whose music allowed for players without sophisticated technical skills to enjoy making music with one another.[29]

France was also a major cultivator of the string-quartet genre, and its popularization of the *quatuor brillant, quatuor concertant,* and *quatuor d'air connus* was absorbed into other parts of Europe.[30] The *quatuor d'air connus* was an arrangement of favorite operatic and theatrical tunes. The *quatuor brillant* was a virtuosic fanfare, usually calling for a standout first violinist who dictated all the melody, sometimes with embellished cadences, while the other three instruments performed a subservient role.[31] Here, just as in *Hausmusik*, the genre allowed three non-professionals to play alongside one virtuosic first violinist.

The *quatuor concertant* was the most popular type of string quartet, featuring four almost equal voices in a more democratic way than the other types of string quartet. Franz Xaver Richter published his Op. 5, a set of six quartets called "*Divertimento a quattro,"* in 1768—but likely to have been written ten years before the publication—in the style of *quatuor concertant*, giving each player a chance to take the main thematic passage. These quartets precede Haydn's Op. 20 by more than a decade, but they display "equality of part writing and particularly liberation of the cello from its bass role," exceptional for the time[32].

The Op. 2 set of six string quartets by Luigi Boccherini (1743–1805), composed in 1761, are closer in style to the quartets that would appear in the last quarter of the eighteenth century in Vienna. Much of the Baroque concertino and ripieno style is done away with, and each of the four instruments is given a prominent voice and individual attention. Even more so than in the

29. Ibid.
30. Bashford, "Society," 6.
31. Parker, *String Quartet*, 52.
32. Simon Standage, "Historical Awareness in Quartet Performance," in *Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet,* 127.

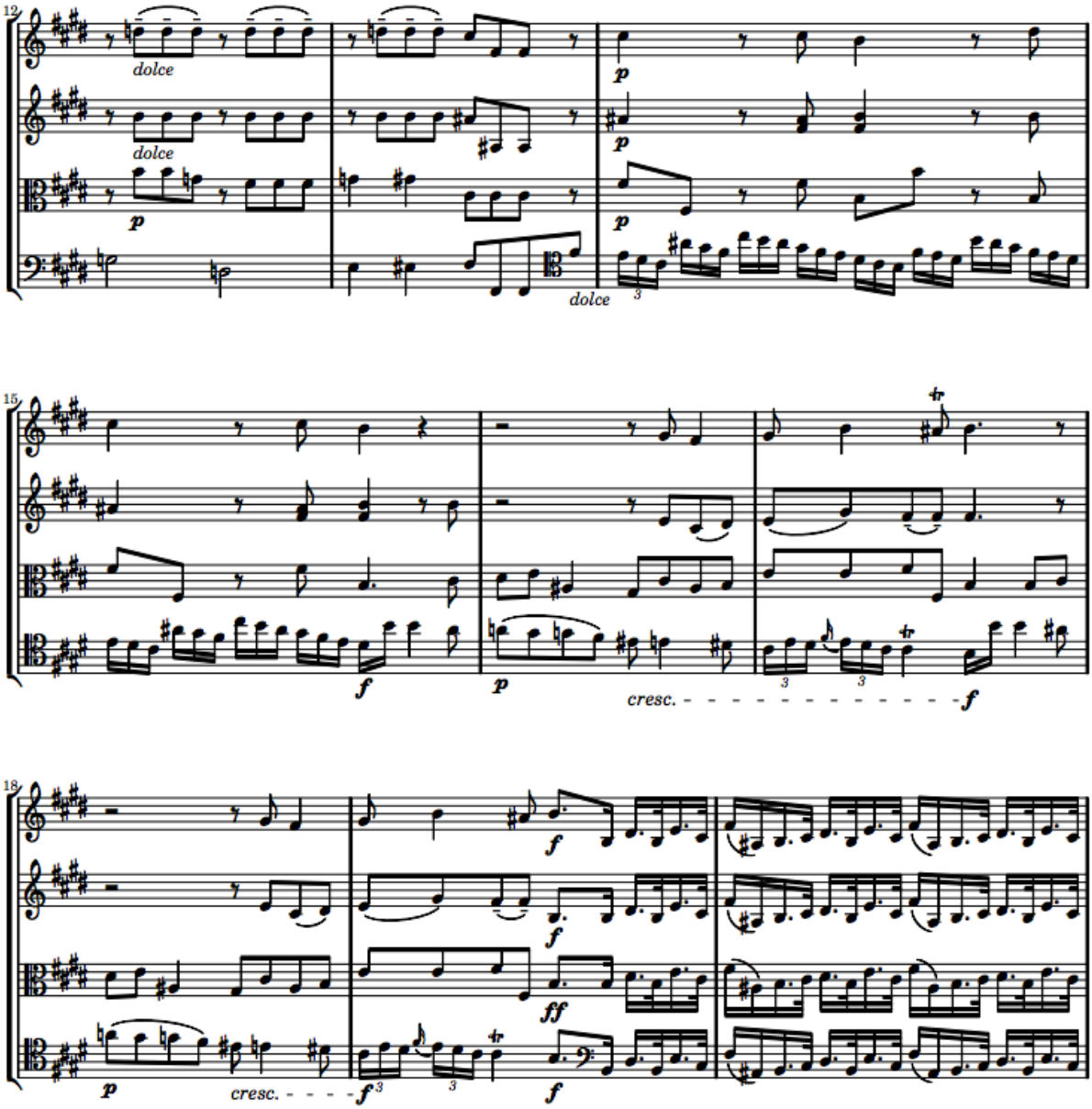
quatuor concertant, all four instruments are given their chance at the main theme. One main difference from the *quatuor concertant*, however, is that the instruments are paired —first violin and cello, first and second violins, second violin and viola, second violin and cello, and viola and cello—while sharing both melody and accompaniment. Although Boccherini gave more attention than other composers of his time to instruments other than the first violin, the method he used to assimilate all the instruments was by composing recurring lines with varied scoring that gave each instrument its turn, "as if the performers are on a revolving stage, [in a] music box," as W. Dean Sutcliffe puts it colorfully.[33]

In Boccherini's music the cello has, remarkably, been elevated to a solo instrument. Before he was a composer, Boccherini was a cellist, which doubtless inspired him to compose "ear-catching" cello lines. With his first set of quartets, Op. 1 (1761), Boccherini employed three-movement forms in fast–slow–fast order, in which the slow movements of the first two quartets display extended solo lines for the cello. In Op. 2, No. 5, I, from his second set, the cello shows off its melody in extreme registers in mm. 14–19, even crossing the registral boundary into the violinist's range (see Ex. 1.1). The second violin, in addition to the cello, is frequently found bearing melodic lines and sharing much of the virtuosic playing with the first violin. Also, in Op. 2, No. 2, I, the second violin mirrors what the first violinist has just completed in mm. 18–21 (see Ex. 1.2), displaying virtuosic thirty-second notes while the first violinist accompanies in eighth-note broken chords. In fact, the second violin's leap into the first violin's range is uncommon in Boccherini's time; rarely does an instrument go out of its explicit range (according to the part its plays), even if it has the main thematic role.[34]

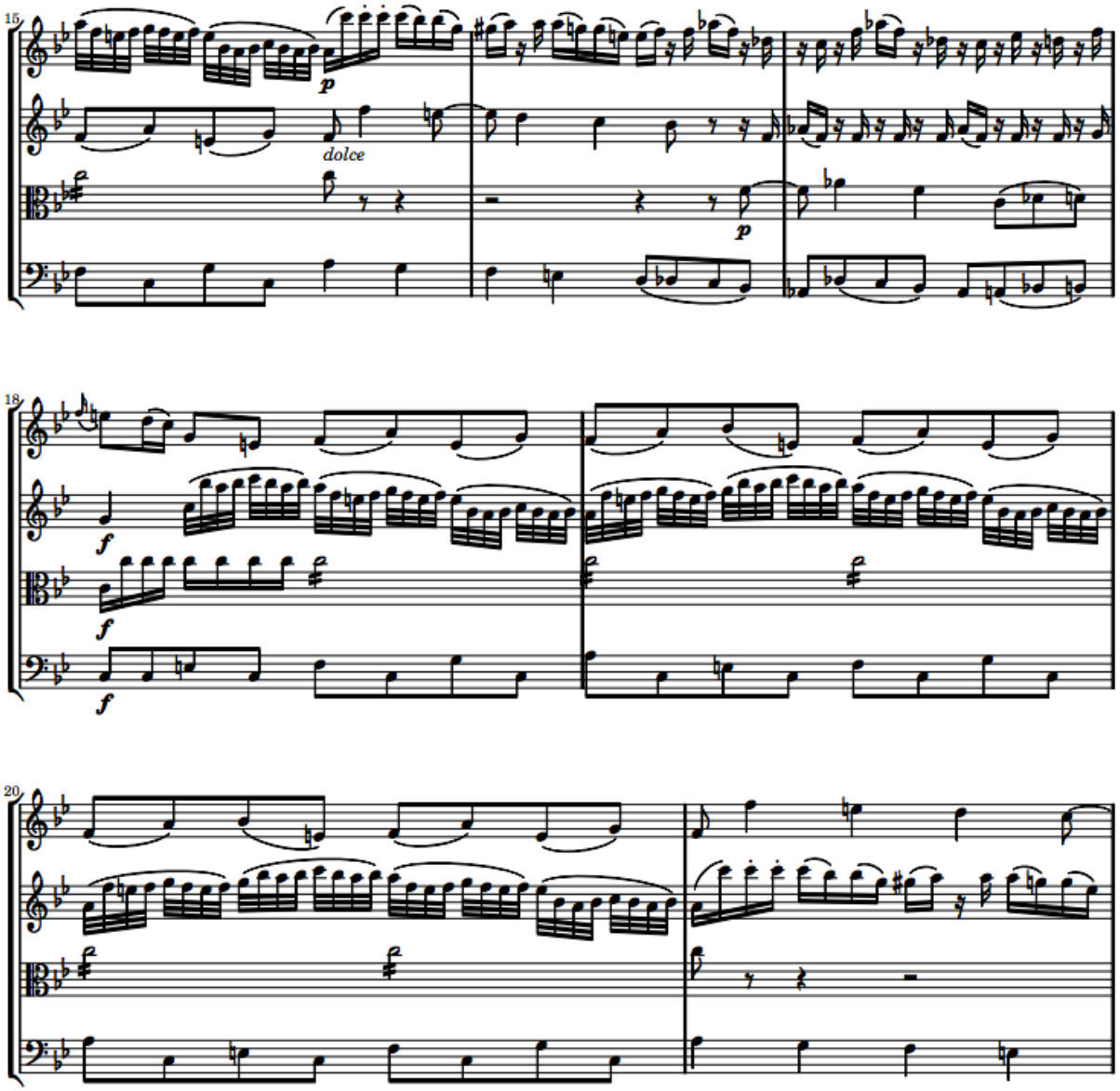
33. W. Dean Sutcliffe, "Haydn, Mozart, and Their Contemporaries," in *Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet,* 193.

34. W. Dean Sutcliffe discusses the high-pitched cello and viola solos from Pierre Vachon's Op. 5, No. 1 in "Haydn, Mozart, and Their Contemporaries," 194–95.

Example 1.1. Luigi Boccherini, Op. 2, No. 5, I, mm. 12–20



Example 1.2. Boccherini, Op. 2, No. 2, I, mm. 15–21



While these quartets are lesser known than that of Haydn and Mozart, they undoubtedly illustrate the varied approaches and styles composers were experimenting with for the string quartet medium. During a period when the first violin virtuoso in a string quartet was the norm,

these composers were able to look outside the box and consider integrating all members of the quartet to fully participate in the music making process. The proceeding chapters on Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven will demonstrate the progressive changes made to all the voices of the string quartet in the late-eighteenth century, especially that of the second violin.

Chapter 2: Theories of the "True" Quartet

Equality in Music

Although it was inevitable for the early string quartets to be a "simple violin solo with accompaniment,"[35] theorists and music critics then and now seem to glorify four equal parts as an ideal feature of the string quartet. As to where this ideal of democracy in string quartets came from, the cellist and chamber musician David Waterman suggests that the

> trend … against leader-dominated quartets … has sociological or political roots rather than musical ones.… [Historically,] the leader concept was so strong … that the great musician-violinist … often happily played concerts in different parts of the world with an *ad hoc* group of three "supporting" local players. … The rejection of dictatorial, controlling personalities in small groups is no doubt a result of liberal emancipations throughout society; and even if it were musically desirable, it is hard to imagine today three highly trained and skilled musicians being able to tolerate absolute power in a "leader".…[36]

Moreover, the concept of four equal parts can have a variety of interpretations to different people: a measurable statistical equilibrium, a conversational give and take from all parts, or something else altogether. No matter the case, the perfect-quartet ideology propagated the notion of equal distribution of parts from all four players; and the way to measure that "equality" almost always had to do with which instrument has the melody.

Equal distribution is not to be confused with what Koch would have considered ideal for string quartet equality in his *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition* (1793)[37]: he is remembered for being a proponent of the learned style, including fugal movements in string

35. Mary Hunter, "'The Most Interesting Genre of Music': Performance, Sociability and Meaning in the Classical String Quartet, 1800–1830," *Nineteenth-Century Music Review* 9 (2012), 56.

36. David Waterman, "Playing Quartets: A View from the Inside," in *Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet,* 100.

37. Heinrich Christoph Koch, *Versuch einer Anleitung zur Composition*, Part 3 (Leipzig: Adam Friedrich Böhme, 1793).

quartets. While acknowledging that the quartet is "one of the most difficult of all kinds of composition, which only the composer who is completely trained and experienced through many compositions may attempt,"[38] Koch continues: "if it really is to consist of four obbligato voices of which none has priority over the others, then it must be treated according to fugal method."[39] A fugue, by design, is a style of composition where each voice takes turns in announcing the subject(s) and countersubjects; in consequence, all instruments generally have a critical part in moving the music forward. Although what Koch claims may sound reasonable, in reality a fugal treatment for all string quartets is impractical, especially if all four movements had to be written that way.

Nevertheless, several composers did make use of the learned, contrapuntal method in their striving for literal equality in string quartets: Carlo d'Ordonez, Florian Gassmann, and Matthias Georg Monn, among others.[40] Often employing fugues and canons in their scoring, these composers went above and beyond to make sure that no single instrument stood out and everyone had their turn to "say" the interesting lines. Despite these composers' attempts at treating each part fairly, the emphasis on equality of parts from similar-minded theorists such as J. C. W. Petiscus propagated homogeneity in performance, even to the point of demanding that "the players must refrain from the expression of their own personalities … [and] 'each quartet player should endeavour with self-denial only to belong to the whole.'"[41] For that reason, the immensely popular quartets from Paris that mostly belong in the *quatour brillant* and *concertant*

38. Koch, *Versuch,* 325–27; trans. Nancy Baker as *Introductory Essay on Composition: The Mechanical Rules of Melody Sections 3 and 4* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 207.

39. Ibid., 207.

40. For a discussion, see Parker, *String Quartet*, 206–08.

41. J. C. W. Petiscus, "Ueber Quartettmusik," *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 12, no. 33 (May 6, 1810): 519, quoted in November, *Beethoven's Theatrical Quartets*, 12.

genres were considered inferior, not belonging in the "true" quartet class compared with those from Austro-German composers.

Another conception that supplements the strict equality-for-all ideology has been the metaphor of conversation, whose most famous expression is surely found in Goethe: the quartet, he writes, represents "four rational persons conversing together."[42] Generally speaking, this conversation-ideal conceives of the quartet as the "give-and-take of thought between four friends, each commenting on the common subject in his own voice and from his own character," working together as a team.[43] In other words, instead of promoting a strict egalitarian society within a quartet, a "true" string quartet can be conversational in which all the voices, although they may not reach parity in melodic lines, go through "frequent textural renewal, suggestive of a spontaneous interchange among the parts," and create an atmosphere of "dynamic interaction" in the music.[44]

Unfortunately, there are limitations to the conversation ideal as well. In his recently published book, *Mozart's Music of Friends*, violist and music theorist Edward Klorman brings to attention an early-nineteenth-century treaty on the art of conversation by Anton Reicha.[45] In his *Traité de mélodie* (1814), the Czech-born French composer and theorist Reicha goes as far as to prescribe a specific set of instructions on how to compose a dialogue, or conversation, in music:

> Writing a melody in the form of a dialogue involves the distribution of the phrases, members, ideas, and periods among two or more voices or instruments, or even between an instrument and a voice. In practicing this, one first makes a succession of well-connected periods, while observing the following.
>
> There are only four ways to write a melody in the form of a dialogue: (1) by alternately performing entire periods, (2) by distributing the phrases, or members

42. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und Zelter*, November 9, 1829 (London and New York: G. Bell and Sons, 1892), 369.
43. Daniel Gregory Mason, *The Quartets of Beethoven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), 4.
44. Edward Klorman, *Mozart's Music of Friends* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 32.
45. Ibid., 46–47.

> of periods, between the different voices which must perform the melody, (3) by creating a dialogue with the figures, that is, through small imitations, (4) by beginning a phrase in one voice, and concluding it in another.
>
> The former is the easiest, where one period is given to one part, and another to a second part, etc.; however, one must be careful to create only short periods, without which the dialogue would become sluggish. In all other aspects, the periods follow the same principles as those written for a single voice.
>
> The dialogue between phrases is more intense and more interesting. In terms of the rhythm, it should proceed in the following way:
>
> | The First part. | The Second part. |
> | --- | --- |
> | First four-measure phrase; | Second four-measure phrase; |
> | Third four-measure phrase; | Fourth four-measure phrase; |
> | Fifth three-measure phrase; | Sixth three-measure phrase; |
> | Seventh eight-measure phrase, etc. | Eighth eight-measure phrase, etc.[46] |

According to Reicha, there is no room for "spontaneous" action and reaction, weaving and unweaving of voices, in a dialogue in progress. His "instructions" are, in effect, a formula for equal part-writing of conversations, if such a thing can exist. Consequently, although many historians and theorists favor taking the conversational view of string quartets, they do admit to its limitations, for in order to have a successful conversation, one must recognize a "leader" while others assume subsidiary roles.[47]

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46. Anton Reicha, *Traité de mélodie* (Paris, 1814), 89–90; English translation from *Treatise on Melody*, trans. Peter M. Landey (Hillsdale, NY: Pendragon Press, 2000), 88.

47. For an extensive discussion on the history of the art of conversation to the metaphor as it relates to the string quartet, see Edward Klorman, *Mozart's Music of Friends*, Chapter 2, "Chamber music and the metaphor of conversation." In this chapter, Klorman refers to Heinrich Koch, who in order to correct the limitations of the conversation metaphor, designates "all four parts [of the string quartet]… as *Hauptstimmen*… in which four co-*Hauptstimmen* are each endowed with certain natural rights to exchange roles…Within a string quartet, Koch regards the four Hauptstimmen as constantly exchanging the three paradigmatic textural roles: (1) the primary melody (Hauptmelodie), (2) the Galant-style bass line, and (3) the accessory melodies (zusammen hängenden Melodien, literally "connected" melodies) of the two remaining parts, which must enhance the expression without obscuring the Hauptmelodie." Klorman, *Mozart's Music*, 34–35. However, it is rather conflicting to give each voice the role of *Hauptstimmen* only to assign them a secondary role to function in.

A contrasting view of conversation is given by Mara Parker in *String Quartet* where she argues, "In a conversation, the individual voices do not assume a particular role. Thus any instrument may take any function at a given moment." She continues, "the members of the ensemble share the responsibility for melodic as well as accompanimental material. Assignment of thematic and supportive lines becomes a timbral consideration rather than a functional one," and "while one may temporarily label an instrument as accompanimental, melodic, or participatory, these attributes are temporary. The conversation is unique in that any voice may play any line and/or

Thus, while it is undeniable that a group of four players will sound as though they are engaged in a conversation during certain passages, the traditional, or even the popular view of matching four voices of the quartet to four personas in a dialogue is not appropriate for describing the majority of quartet music.[48] Music scholar W. Dean Sutcliffe writes:

> Conversation is often associated with one of the articles of faith about the string quartet, that there should be four equal parts…. Yet any literal equality of melodic material is barely possible in later eighteenth-century instrumental style…. The most common disposition will feature the melodic line at the top. *Gravity pulls upward in a string quartet, meaning that the first violin is bound to be the main melodic protagonist…* The melodic lead will of course alternate, but this rarely approaches statistical equality; and where it does, the results risk sounding contrived and mechanical, just the opposite of the imagined democratic ideal [italics added].[49]

Here, Sutcliffe warns against "statistical equality," just as Koch's fugue-for-all ideal can fall into sounding "contrived and mechanical."

A practical application of this way of thinking is offered by David Waterman, the cellist of the Endellion Quartet, who discusses the quartet's hierarchy of voicing as follows.[50] In a string quartet, he writes, there is one primary voice, or "simply the one that draws the ear most readily to itself"; a subsidiary voice (or more than one), which "must not dominate the texture … [and] may feel subsidiary despite its motivic nature if it is in a lower register, more fragmented, than the main voice, if its entry starts later, or simply

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function at any given moment. The ability to predict what line will be heard in which instrument is gone." Parker, *String Quartet*, 241–42, 278, 281.

48. There is a rather humorous account of a string quartet performance by a librettist and writer about music, Giuseppe Carpani. Writing about a performance of Haydn's quartets, he describes each player of the quartet as follows: "A first violin who was a spirited and likable middle-aged man; a second violin who was his friend and whose main function was to keep the conversation going, rarely drawing attention to himself; a learned and sententious cello who often lent gravity to the utterances of the first violin; and a viola figured as a charming but chattering woman with nothing important to say, who could at least occasionally let the others draw breath." Giuseppe Carpani, *Le Haydine* (1812), cited in Finscher, *Studien zur Geschichte*, 288, quoted in Hunter, "Most Interesting," 120.

49. Sutcliffe, "Haydn, Mozart, and Their Contemporaries," 187.

50. Waterman, "Playing Quartets," 97–126.

if it has less distinctiveness"; and one or two accompanists that provide support but always stay in the background.[51]

Then, in order to embrace the entire string quartet genre, it becomes necessary and even ideal to give each instrument its own independent role and identity, which may at times exchange and overlap according to the musical, textural, and sonorous needs of the music.[52] Such roles may include being a chord filler, a lower-octave unison, or even an accompaniment; but playing these parts does not imply that one instrument is less important than the other or that one is subsidiary while another is dominant. All the instruments must work together, playing within their given roles that the music dictates to build up a particular sound effect, emphasize textural contrast, and create special harmonic moments. To this end, each player must remain fluid in switching from one role to another in a matter of a few measures or even notes. Without these intimate inner workings from the instruments, a string quartet would not be so richly colored or have its limitless expressionistic power.

Theory versus Reality

Regrettably, during much of the Classical era, the conversation or independent identity theory remained mostly a theory, for by and large the music developed an even greater dependency on the virtuoso first violin. Although critical opinion held that the violin-concerto-like string quartet was not the most desirable kind by any means, the music that coexisted with these theorists could not and did not live up to their quartet ideology. In music and performances,

51. Ibid., 103–6. Waterman also discusses a few exceptions to the rule of primary voice: 1. when two primary voices overlap; 2. successive canonic entries where each entry is important; 3. where more than one voice is significant, such as in a fugue; 4. in variations where the repetitions may present theme in lower register while ornamental gestures fill-in in higher registers.

52. Ibid.

then, the first violinist was still very much the center of attention. Early in the nineteenth century, for instance, a critic with sharp ears was able to post a disapproving review of the violinist Karl Möser and his reticent collaborators:

> Herr Möser ranks high above them all [Messrs. Rode, Spohr, Schuppanzigh, Mazas, and Maurer] in the performance of these quartets, and it remains only to wish that Herr Möser could bring his collaborators along with him—not to play their parts so modestly, that he rather gave each one the opportunity to let his part contribute to the pleasure of the whole, to bring it to the greatest perfection. Herr Krautz [cellist] seems to be able to notice that quartets are incomplete when the players are not all sufficiently independent…. The second violin, however, and also the viola, imagining themselves too unimportant, stay throughout too much in the background, thus leaving too much to Herr Möser and denying the whole that fiery and spirited life, the freshness and blooming lift that such classical works carry.[53]

Another somewhat humorous account of the first violin soloist describes "a famous violin virtuoso who once miscast himself as the first violin in one of finest string quartets[. As] the late Arthur Whiting remarked: 'The other three gentlemen held the life-net for him while he did gymnastic feats. Sometimes they caught him, sometimes not.'"[54]

Historically, as mentioned above, many composers were still in favor of first-violin dominance in a group. Such was the case of a reviewer of the famous French violinist Pierre Baillot:

> [These works] gave to our great violinist the occasion to develop his talent with such a colossal number of such varied and delicate nuances that for nearly two and a half hours, the admiration and rapture never ceased to echo from all quarters of the hall, and, on leaving, one heard nothing but the words "perfect," "admirable" … we believe that if Haydn, Mozart and Beethoven[55] had heard their works in the rendering of *Mr. Baillot and his able accompanists,* they would

53. *Berliner Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* 2 (12 January 1825): 16, quoted in Hunter, "Most Interesting," 61.

54. Mason, *Quartets of Beethoven*, 4. Arthur Whiting (1861–1936) was a pianist, teacher, and writer about music.

55. It is astonishing that the reviewer even mentions Beethoven, whom historians attribute to achieving "both compositional and psychological democracy [through] the independence of the parts" in his late quartets, as mentioned in Hunter, "Most Interesting," 55.

> swear that their effect was [even] greater than they had intended to produce [italics mine].[56]

It may come as a surprise to readers today that Baillot himself, one of France's most celebrated violinists, was not able to discern any inconsistency between an ideal string quartet and "solo" first violin with accompaniment. In fact, a poem by the violinist expounds his extremely violin-centric point of view, pronouncing the violin as a "king," who "[leads] his republic," and is the "father of his subjects" (the other instruments).[57] His thoughts on how a string quartet should sound clarify his stance even further:

> it is proper for the first violinist, more than the others, to be in a position to be heard in all details. In order for the quartet to be followed with interest, the first violinist should have to his right the greatest number of listeners, and nobody should be to his left or behind him. This arrangement is indispensable for whoever wants to hear well….[58]

Baillot's view of the violin at the top of the hierarchy stems largely from the fact that the music he was performing did indeed emphasize the first violin above the others. Mara Parker's categorization of string quartets from 1750 through 1797 shows that the examples before the turn of the century consist mostly of the solo plus accompaniment type, classified in her book as "The Lecture."[59] There may be several underlying causes for the high number of "lecture" quartets; one of the most practical involves the actual players and performance venues. It was not until around the 1820s that professional quartet groups appeared in public concerts. Not surprisingly, there are no written records of public string quartet concerts in Vienna during Haydn's lifetime.[60] When a professional quartet was gathered, most of the performances took place at private and

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56. *La Revue musicale* 1, no. 7 (March 1827): 190–91, quoted in Mary Hunter, "The Most Interesting," 60.

57. The entire poem is quoted in Klorman, *Mozart's Music of Friends*, 51–52.

58. Pierre Baillot, *The Art of the Violin* (Paris, 1835), trans. Louis Goldberg (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1963): 463, quoted in Hunter, "Most Interesting," 60.

59. Parker's exhaustive discourse on the four quartet categories—the lecture, the polite conversation, the debate, and the conversation—can be found in her book, *String Quartet.* Of these four types, the lecture makes up the biggest group. See pp. 76–84 for a complete list of compositions considered under the lecture.

60. Hunter, "Interesting," 115.

informal domestic settings with the players at hand. Although such groups may have included professionals, it was not uncommon to have groups mostly made up of amateurs with perhaps one, maybe two professional players.

Circumstances like these can be deduced from the vast popularity of print editions that lack any record of public performances. There are also first-hand reviews and reminiscences of events from the accounts of music enthusiasts and connoisseurs. Dittersdorf's much-quoted occasion of a quartet gathering gives us a picture of one such casual occasion: "we played six new quartets [by Richter]… Schweitzer… played the cello, I played the first [violin], my older brother the second violin and my younger [brother] the viola… "[61] In recounting another well-known occasion when both Haydn and Mozart were among the players, the Irish tenor and composer Michael Kelly wrote:

> Storace gave a quartet party to his friends. The players were tolerable; not one of them excelled on the instrument he played, but there was a little science among them, which I dare say will be acknowledged when I name them:
>
> The First Violin ……Haydn
> The Second Violin ……. Baron Dittersdorf
> The Violoncello ……..Vanhall
> The Tenor …….. Mozart
>
> The poet Casti and Paisiello formed part of the audience. I was there, and a greater treat, or a more remarkable one, cannot be imagined.[62]

Beginning in the late-eighteenth century, the glorified ideal of the "true" string quartet has been associated with four equal parts. Theorists and composers alike have tried to achieve the status of "the true string quartet" with various theoretical and practical solutions. Whether a true equality of parts has been realized or how it was actualized in the music produced is debatable depending on the different tools for analysis one chooses to measure with. The next

61. "Wir machten uns an sechs neue [Rittersche] Quartetts…. Schweitzer…spielte das Violoncello, ich die erste [Violine], mein ältere Brüder die zweite Violine und mein jüngere [Brüder] die Bratsche…." Quoted in Webster, "Towards a History," 228, my translation.

62. Michael Kelly, *Reminiscences*, ed. Roger Fiske (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 122.

three chapters will survey and analyze the string quartets of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven through the eyes of the second violin to understand how the theory of equality progressively matured in the hands of these Viennese masters.

Chapter 3: Haydn's String Quartets

As it happens, the role or significance of the second violin of a string quartet has scarcely been documented. Considering the humble origins and responsibilities of a second violinist from the onset of string quartets, this is actually reasonable and even justifiable. There is no denying that in much of the string quartet repertoire, the first violin is the soloist or even the leader, the cello is bass, and the second violin and viola are the chord fillers. The second violin was there to bring in the lower octave unison to the first violin, double the notes of other instruments, and act as a rhythmic stabilizer, accompaniment, or even the bass. This holds true for many of the string quartets from the mid-to-late eighteenth century into the nineteenth century.

Most of Haydn's string quartets, especially the early ones, tend to lean on the first violinist as the main melody-bearer and virtuosic exhibitionist. As Floyd and Margaret Grave point out,

> only rarely is there true equality …. inevitably the first violin predominates as group leader and principal bearer of melodic responsibility. For Haydn, this holds true among later as well as earlier works, and it seems only natural to hear the top part as a surrogate for the composer's own voice, a controlling presence that guides the progress of music.[63]

First-violin leadership was born not only out of the compositional norm of Haydn's time but also out of practicality, as the players of these quartets typically included amateur instrumentalists in roles other than the first violin (as discussed in chapters 1 and 2).

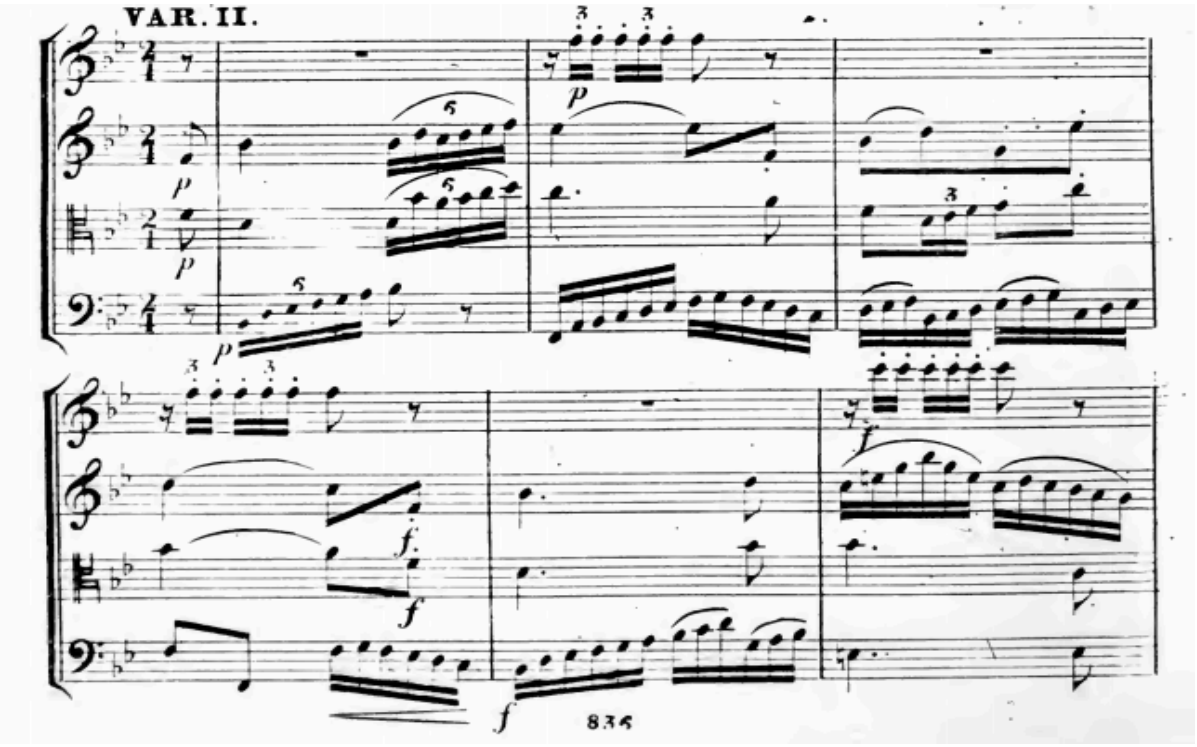
Nevertheless, the second violin is "occasionally given a crumb—often a very beautiful crumb—to itself."[64] In many cases, the second violin gets its brief moment of sunshine during a

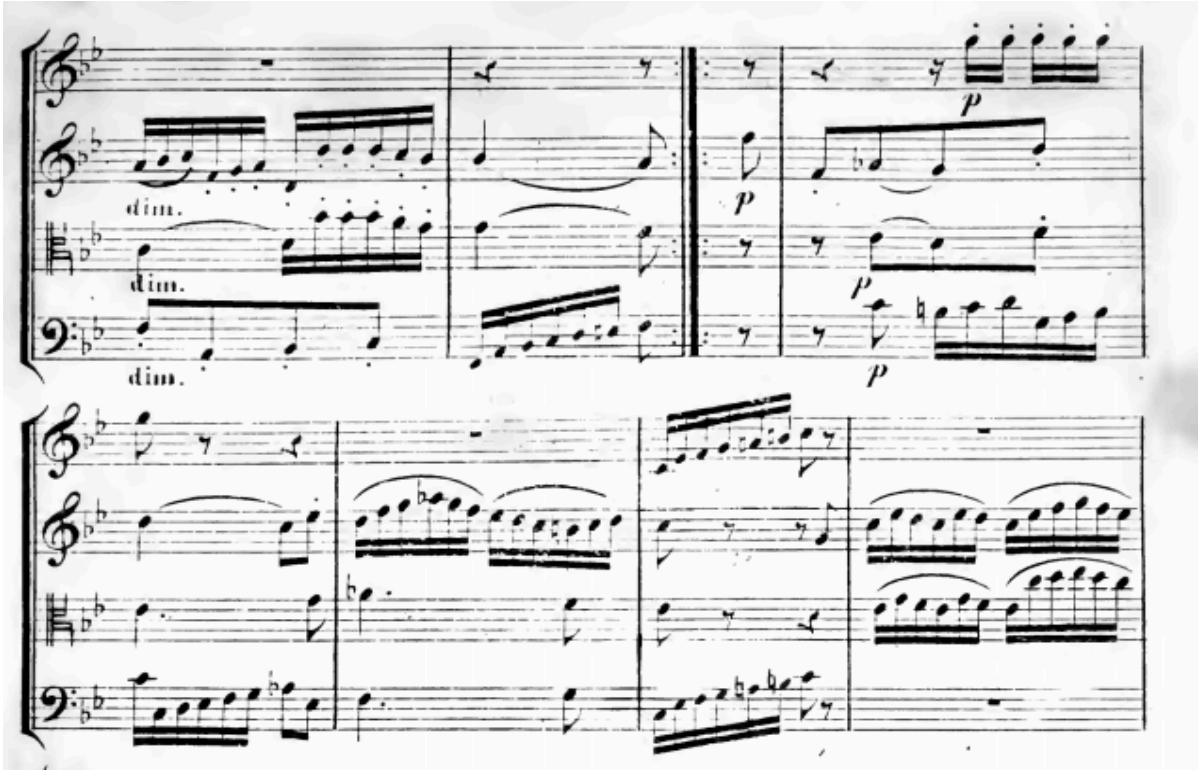
63. Grave, *String Quartets of Haydn*, 26.
64. *A Rebecca Clarke Reader*, ed. Liane Curtis (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004), 106.

set of variations—where for one variation, it may play the main theme—or in a fugal movement, where it may open the movement with a complete statement of the subject. The first example of Haydn using the *first* violinist as an accompanimental instrument is found in his Op. 9, No. 5, first movement. The *poco Adagio* is a set of strophic variations—this work is the only number in the Op. 9 set that does not open with a sonata-form movement—and throughout the course of the complete theme and succeeding variations, the first violin prevails as the dominant force in carrying the melody and its varied forms. Except for the unison ending in the last few measures of this movement, Haydn does not demonstrate any textural variation other than first violin melody floating atop the accompaniment of the three lower instruments.

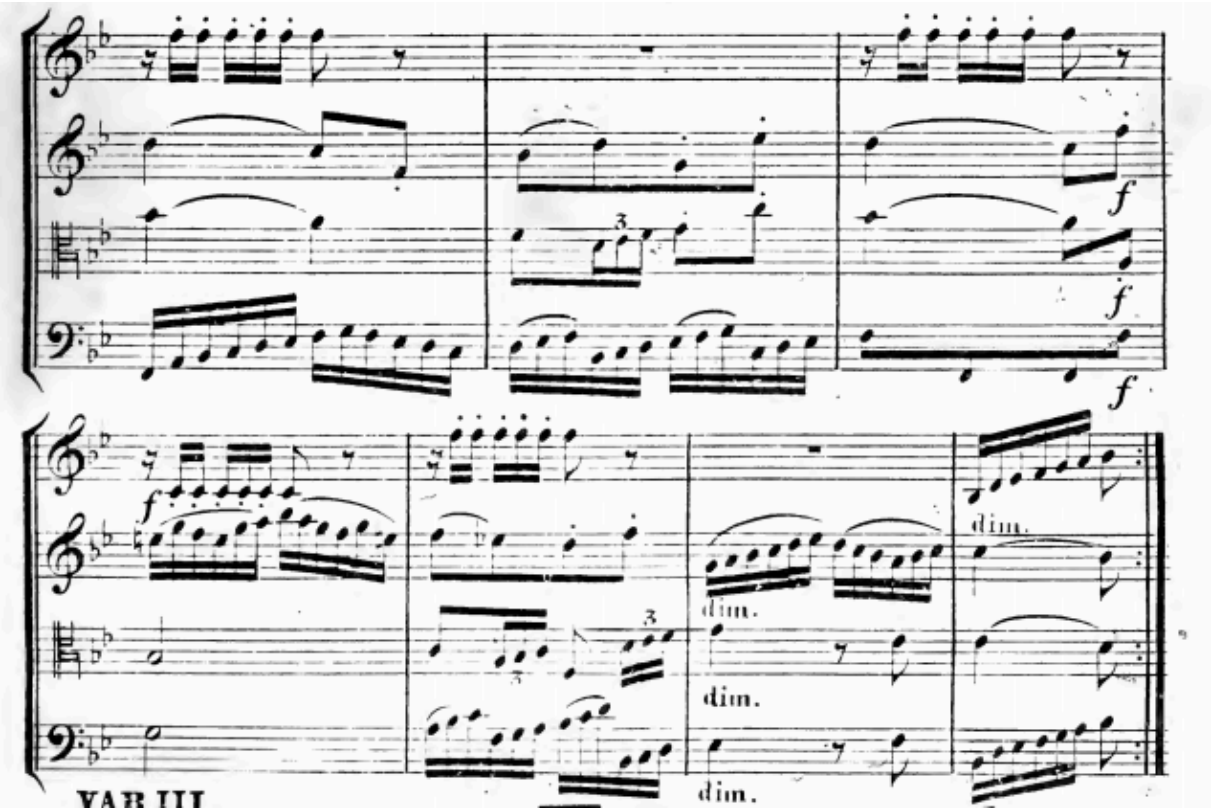
However, for the entire second variation, the second violin, viola, and cello take on the roles of melody and moving parts while the first violin adds occasional sixteenth-note accompanimental figures (see Ex. 3.1). This is the moment when the first violin has its one and only respite in the opening movement, and the second violin now mainly has the theme. The viola closely accompanies in thirds and sixths, while the cello moves the variation forward in rhythmic sixteenth-note runs. It is worth noting, though, that the second violin's melodic variations rarely go into the high soprano range but maintain the melodic line within the normal second-violin register. Perhaps to the contemporary audience, the second violin part may not seem substantial, as it stays underneath the first violin and is, at times, hard to hear over the sixteenth-note runs of the cello. Nevertheless, when one observes that most of Haydn's Op. 9 and Op. 17 quartets exhibit music resembling that of a first-violin cadenza, as in Op. 9, No. 2, III, this second variation of the fifth quartet is revolutionary in its employment of the second violin (and viola) as theme bearer (see Ex. 3.2).

Example 3.1. Haydn, Op. 9, No. 5, I, variation 2

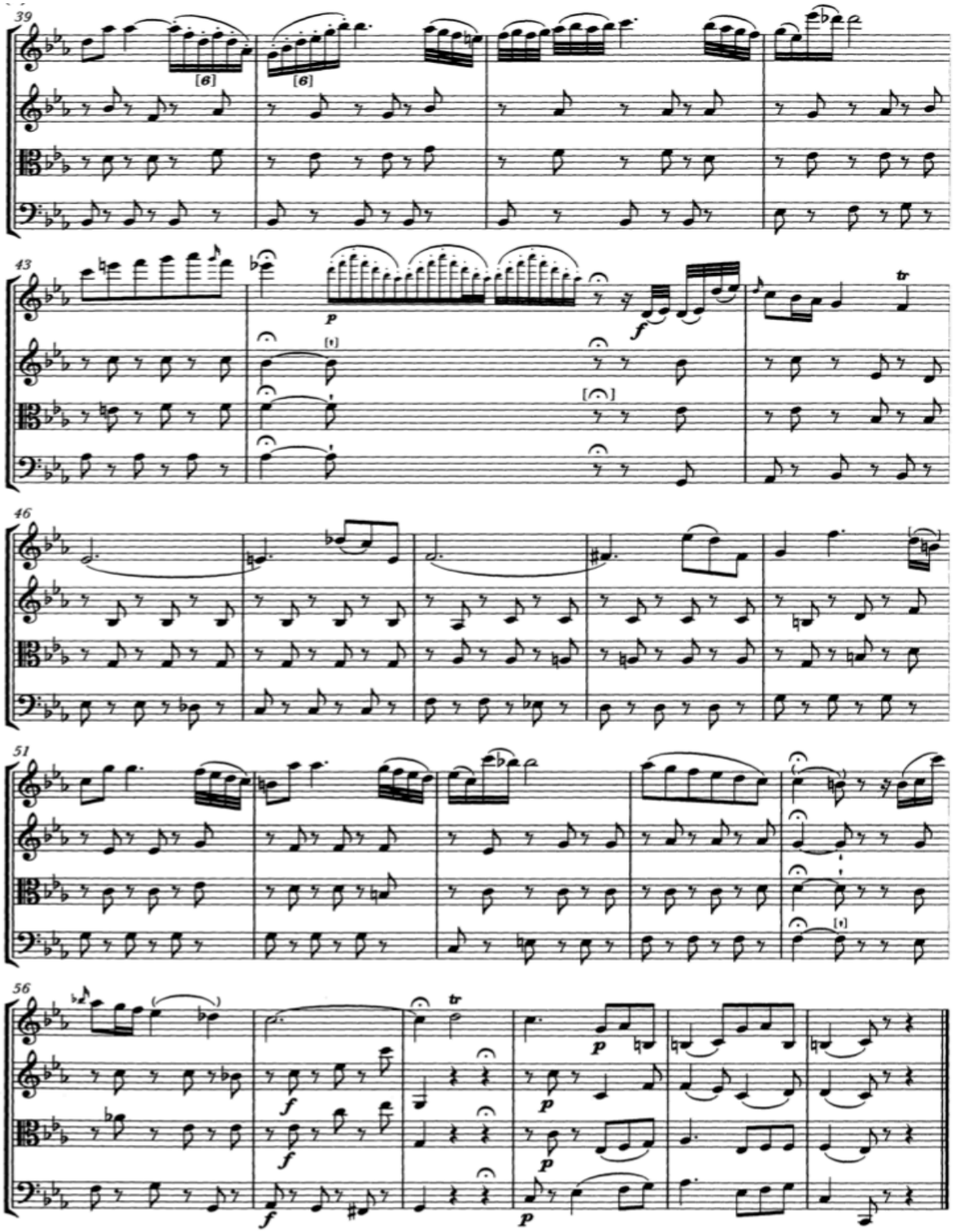




Example 3.1, Concluded

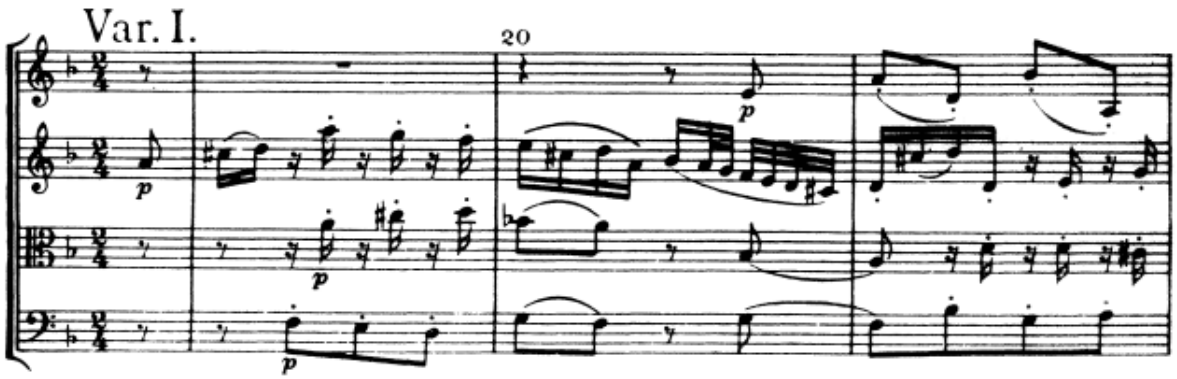


Example 3.2. Joseph Haydn, Op. 9, No. 2, III, mm. 39–61



Another striking example of a strophic theme and variations is the second movement of Haydn's Op. 20, No. 4, *Un poco Adagio affettuoso.* Although the Op. 20 as a set is not far from its predecessors in its demeanor, it has been appreciated as an endeavor to extend the traditional boundaries of the string quartet by becoming less dependent on the first violin and as a result, bringing more equality among the players.[65] After eighteen measures of a slow and soulful theme in D minor, the first variation is led by the second violin with a rhythmic, yet lyrical solo melodic line (see Ex. 3.3). In contrast to the variation example from Op. 9, No.5, I, here, the second violin is given the "beautiful crumb" and carries on the entire variation in solid first-violin-register. The first violin then, is "left out of the main material" and performs as the rhythmic accompaniment and harmonic filler during this variation, with leaping eighth notes similar to the cello's.[66] The conversational exchanges between the second violin and the viola, while the first violin adds eighth-note accompanimental figures mimicking the cello lines, are also worth noting.

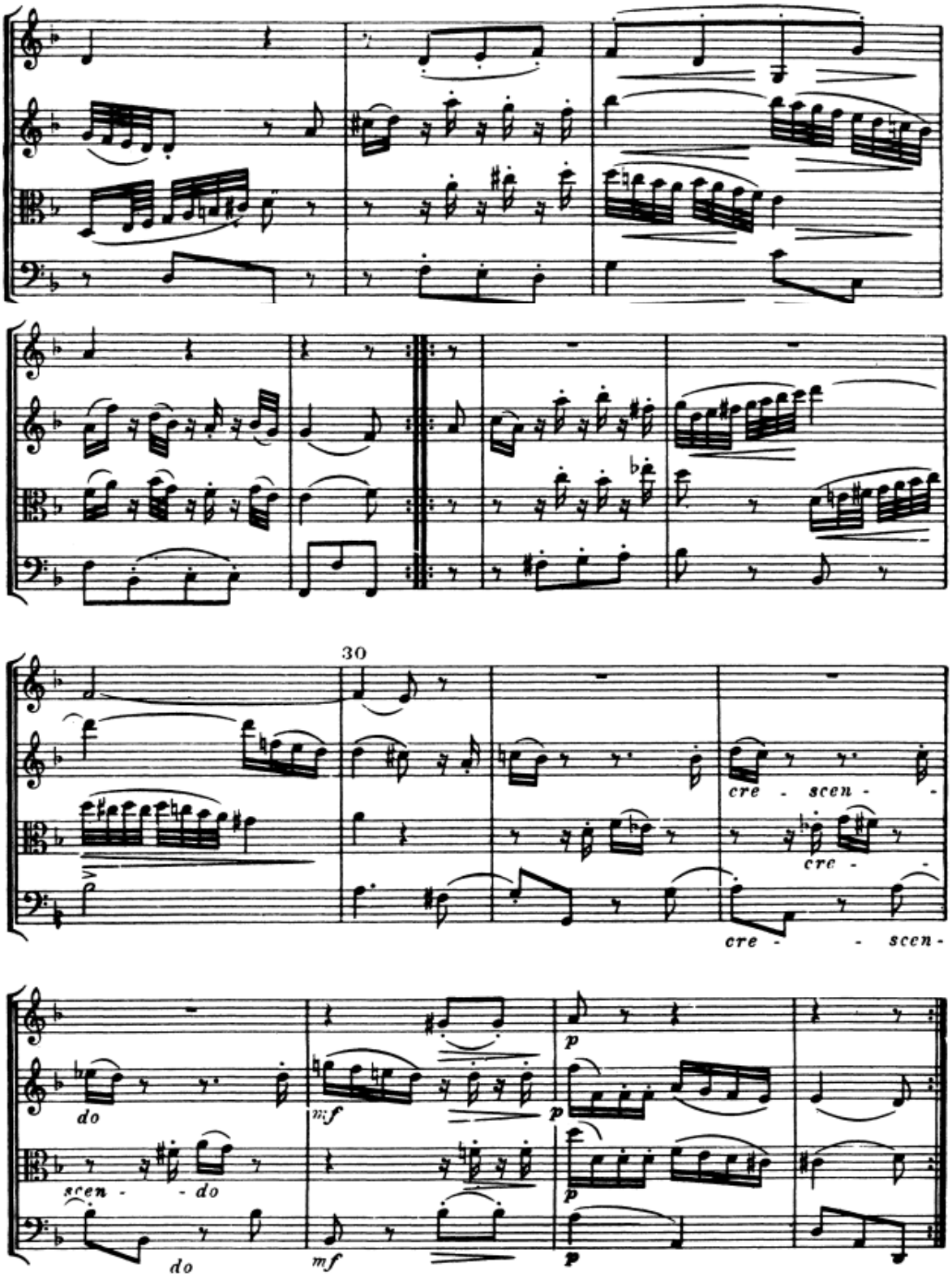
Example 3.3. Haydn, Op. 20, No. 4, II, mm. 19–36



65. Grave, *String Quartets of Haydn*, 183. For an expanded discussion of this movement, see Elaine Sisman, *Haydn and the Classical Variation*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993) 138–142, where she comments on the unusualness of this variation movement and the new ways in which Haydn begins to compose the variations henceforth.

66. Sisman, 139.

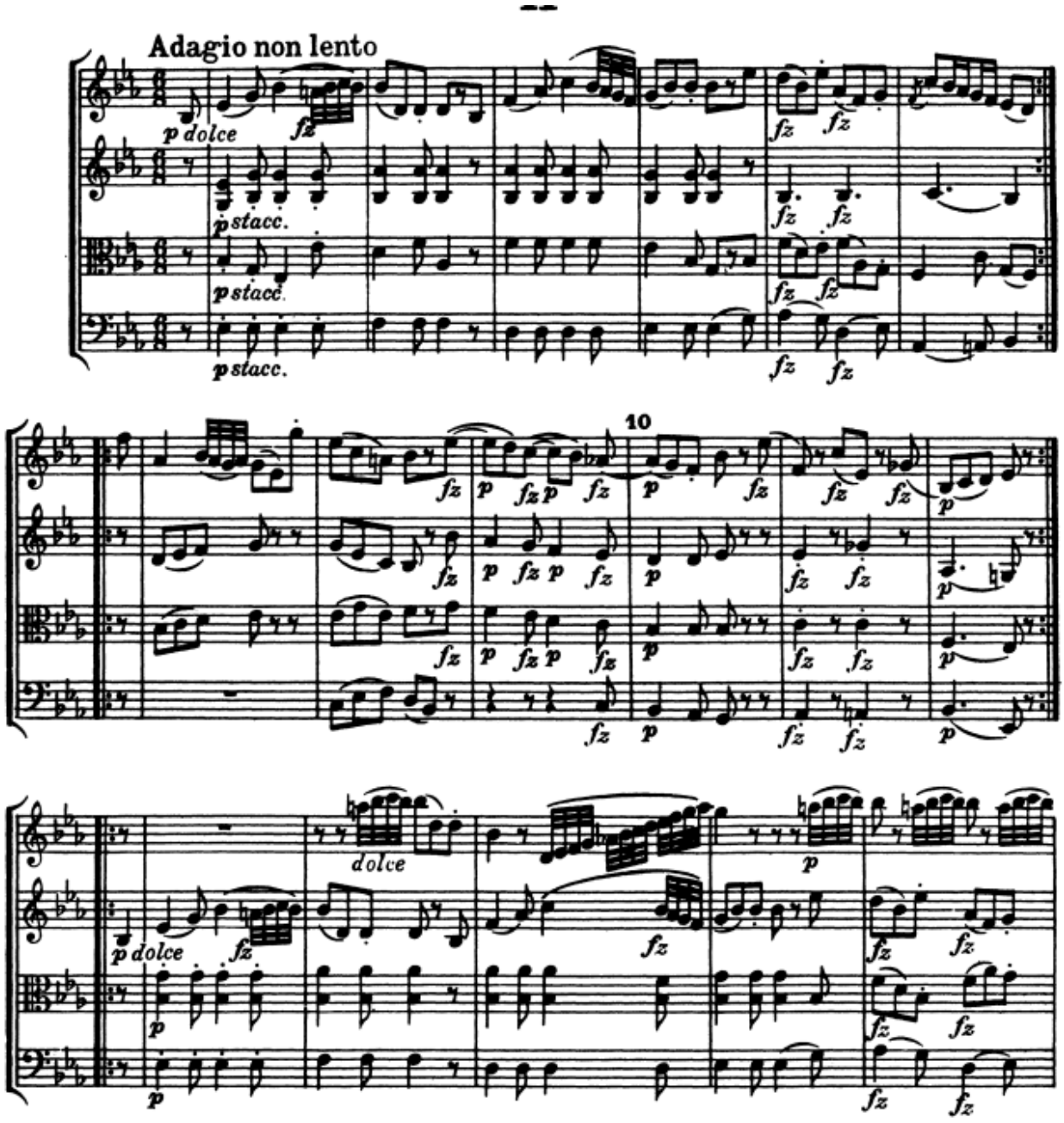
Example 3.3, Concluded



Unlike in his previous variation movements from Op. 9, Haydn's effort to distribute the melodic lines and diversify the quartet's texture is apparent in the occasional use of pairing of instruments, mainly of the second violin and viola, first violin and second violin, and viola and cello. However, the most eye-opening textural surprise is found in the following second variation. The weight of the ensemble has shifted down to the cello, which has entirely done away with its bass role and is now carrying the theme in a highly elaborate and virtuosic manner while the higher three instruments accompany the cello. The next and third variation goes back to the conventional texture, with the first violin in an ornate sixteenth-note melodic line over a simple bass line from the rest of the instruments. Comparing the second and third variations side by side, it is as if Haydn turned one variation upside down by reversing the weight of the melody from top to bottom, or bottom to top, in his experimental string-quartet laboratory.

A similar example is found in the first quartet of Haydn's Op. 50 set. During the variations of the second movement, Haydn transfers the first violin theme of the opening to the second violin in almost exactly the same notes, adding a few embellishments to the melodic line. The first violin adds high-register ornamental figures while the viola and the cello accompany in solid bass-line progressions (see Ex. 3.4). The first-violin ornaments are then transferred to the cello in the third variation, where ascending sixty-fourth-note embellishments adorn the line over the first violin melody. By now, a compositional trend is apparent in Haydn's slow movements, especially during a variation movement, in giving the melody to the second violin or instruments other than the first violin. In the *Adagio Cantabile* of Op. 50, No. 2, Haydn begins with a low-register melody in the second violin for eight measures followed by the first violin's ornamented "answer" an octave higher (see Ex. 3.5).

Example 3.4. Haydn, Op. 50, No. 1, II, mm. 1–24



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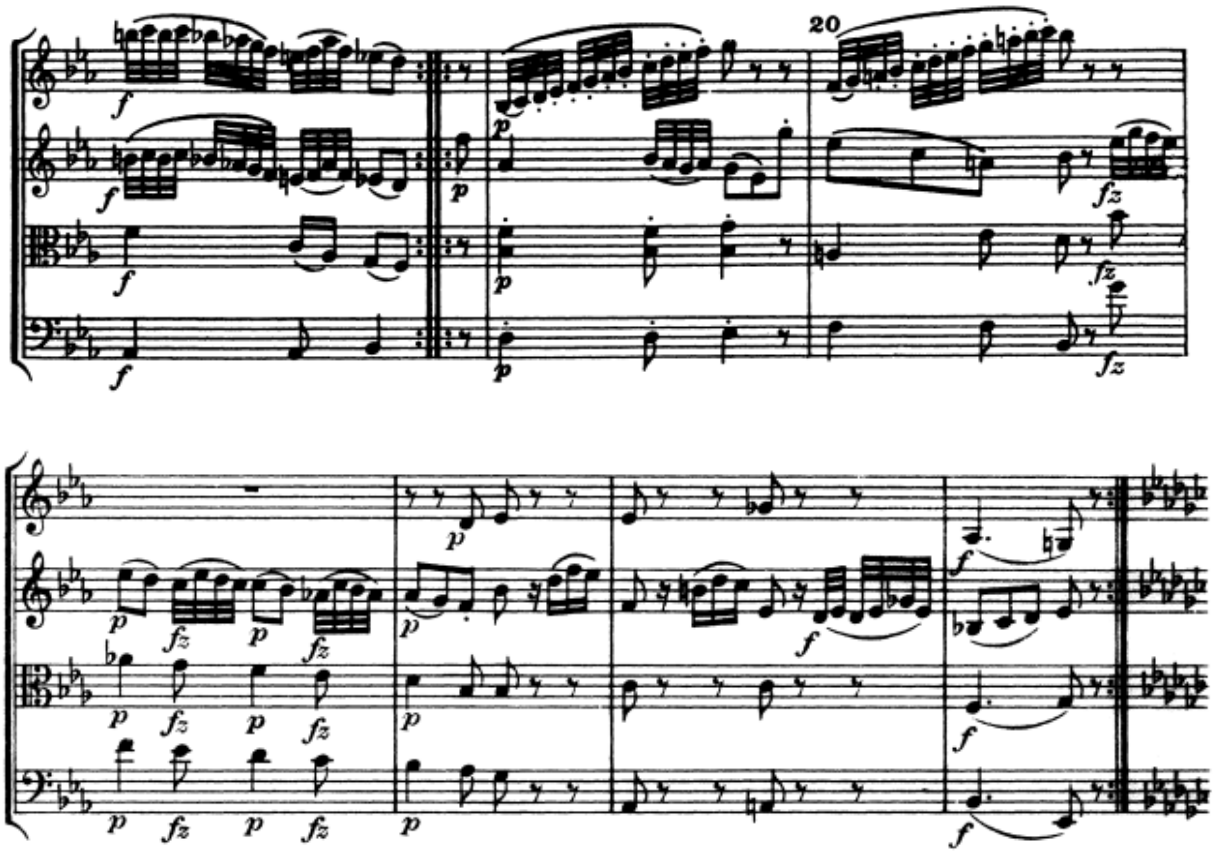
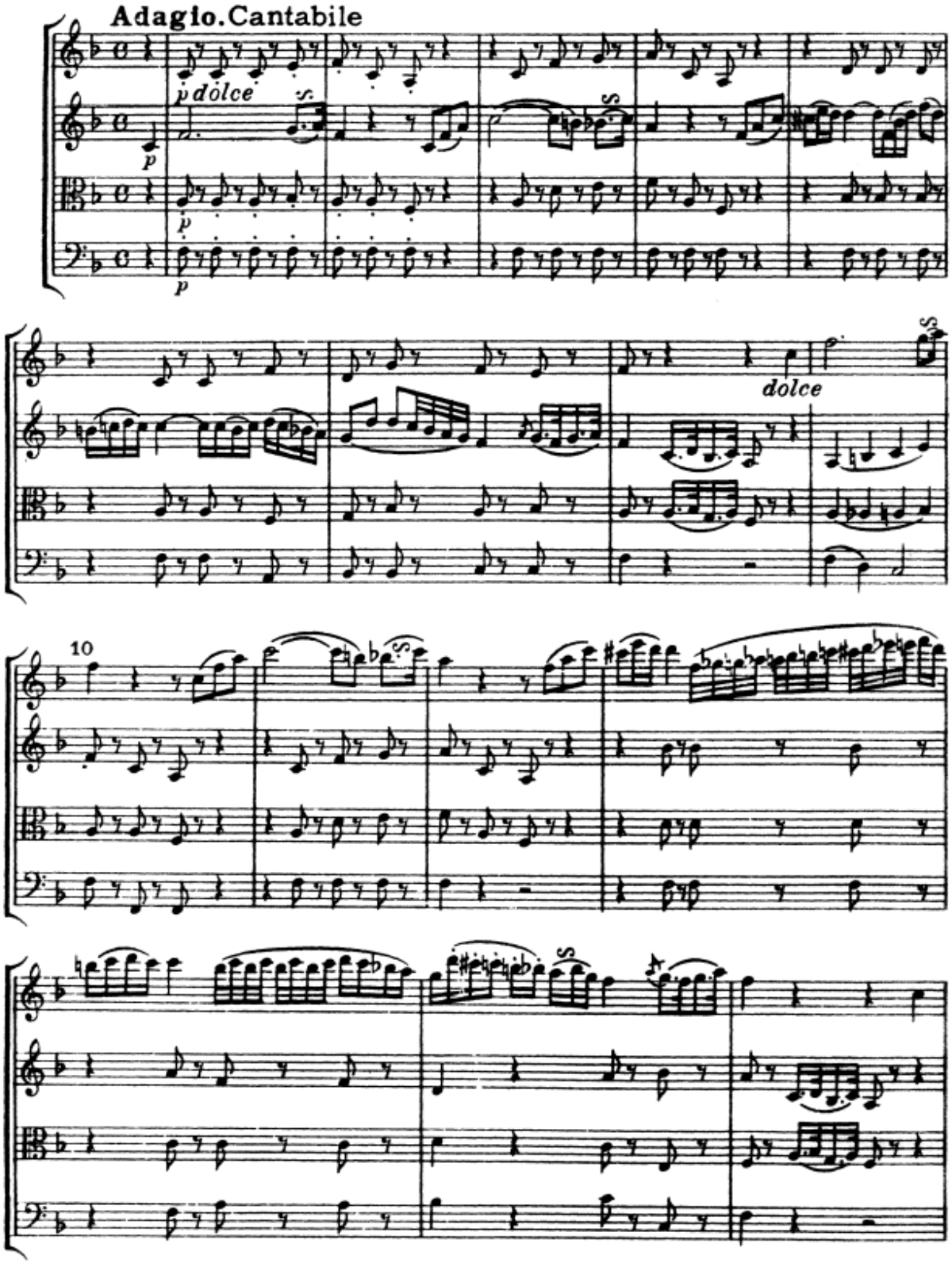
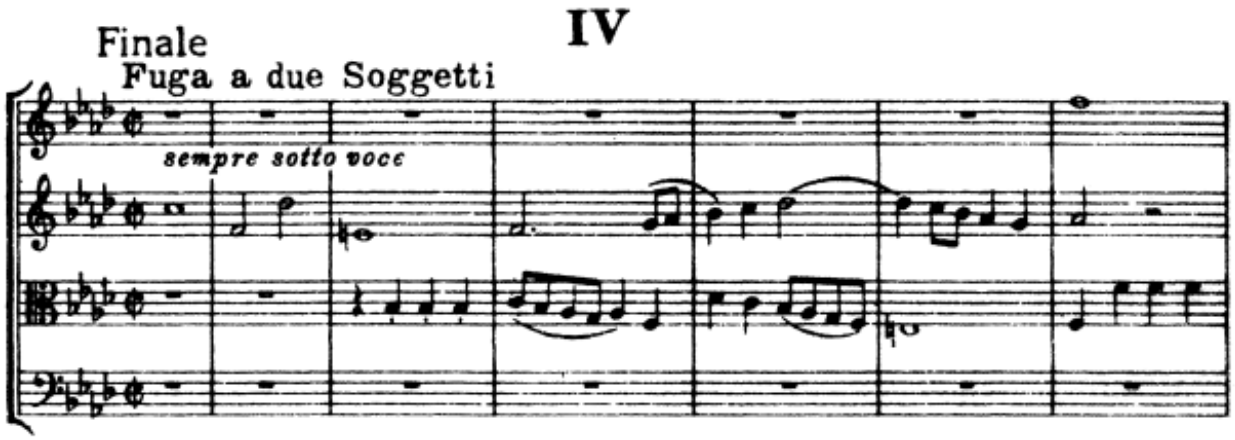


Example 3.5. Haydn, Op. 50, No. 2, II, mm. 1–16



Following his Op. 17 quartets, perhaps in response to some critic's remark that his music was empty and ignorant of counterpoint, or possibly driven from his own satisfaction, Haydn closes three of the Op. 20 quartets with a fugue.[67] Fugue was the "preferred" method of quartet composition from theorists like Koch because of its contrapuntal nature, which managed "equal" distribution of parts to all instruments. Although the fugal finales of Nos. 2 and 6 begin with first-violin entrances, the finale of No. 5 has the second violin enter with the first statement of the subject in the exposition (see Ex. 3.6). For the first six measures, the second violin opens with the subject while the viola joins in with the countersubject in m. 3. The fugue is set in a serious F minor, in keeping with the opening and second movements, and the subject's long note-values in cut time make this movement stand out as the most contrapuntal, learned, and archaic sounding of the three fugues in the Op. 20 set. Although Haydn integrates fugal episodes into some movements, a full-fledged movement that is entirely fugal only appears once more in his string quartet output after the Op. 20 set, within the finale of Op. 50, No. 4.

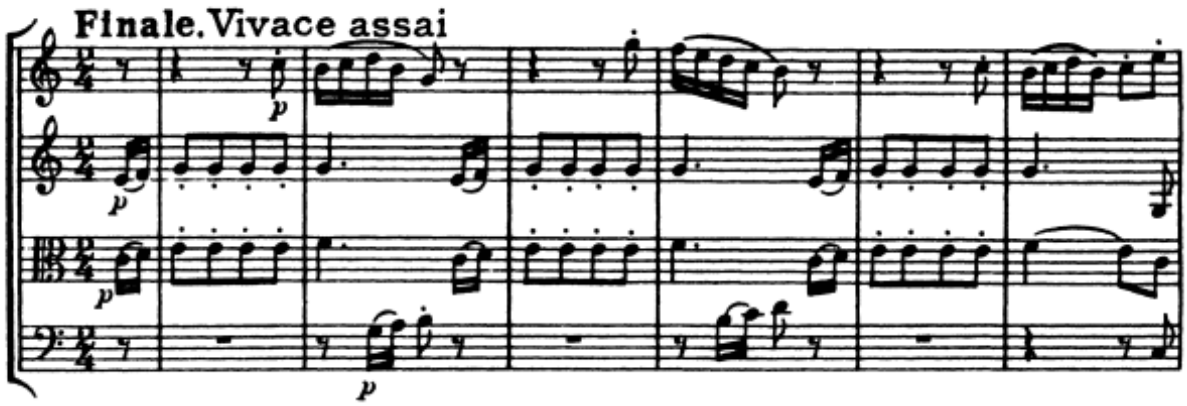
Example 3.6. Haydn, Op. 20, No. 5, IV, mm. 1–7



67. Grave, *String Quartets of Haydn*, 177. Haydn never uses fugues for any of his subsequent string quartets, except for the finale of Op. 50, No. 4.

Rather than using fugues in which all the voices are obliged in a somewhat mechanical manner to engage in the music, Haydn composes conversational quartet music for all four instruments to participate in a more musically sonorous and flexible way (this "new manner" is often thought to be one of the special achievements of the influential Op. 33 set, which followed a decade or so after Op. 20). The last movement of Op. 50, No. 2 in C major begins with a second violin and viola entrance with sixteenth-note upbeats followed by four eighth notes then a quarter (or a dotted quarter) note. This seven-note opening motive becomes the most repeated phrase throughout the movement. The "answer" provided by the first violin in m. 2 and onwards along with upward three-note figuration from the cello adds to the motivic layering that provides the means for moving the movement forward (see Ex. 3.7).

Example 3.7. Haydn, Op. 50, No. 2, IV, mm. 1–6. Opening motive in second violin and viola followed by "answer" in first violin and cello

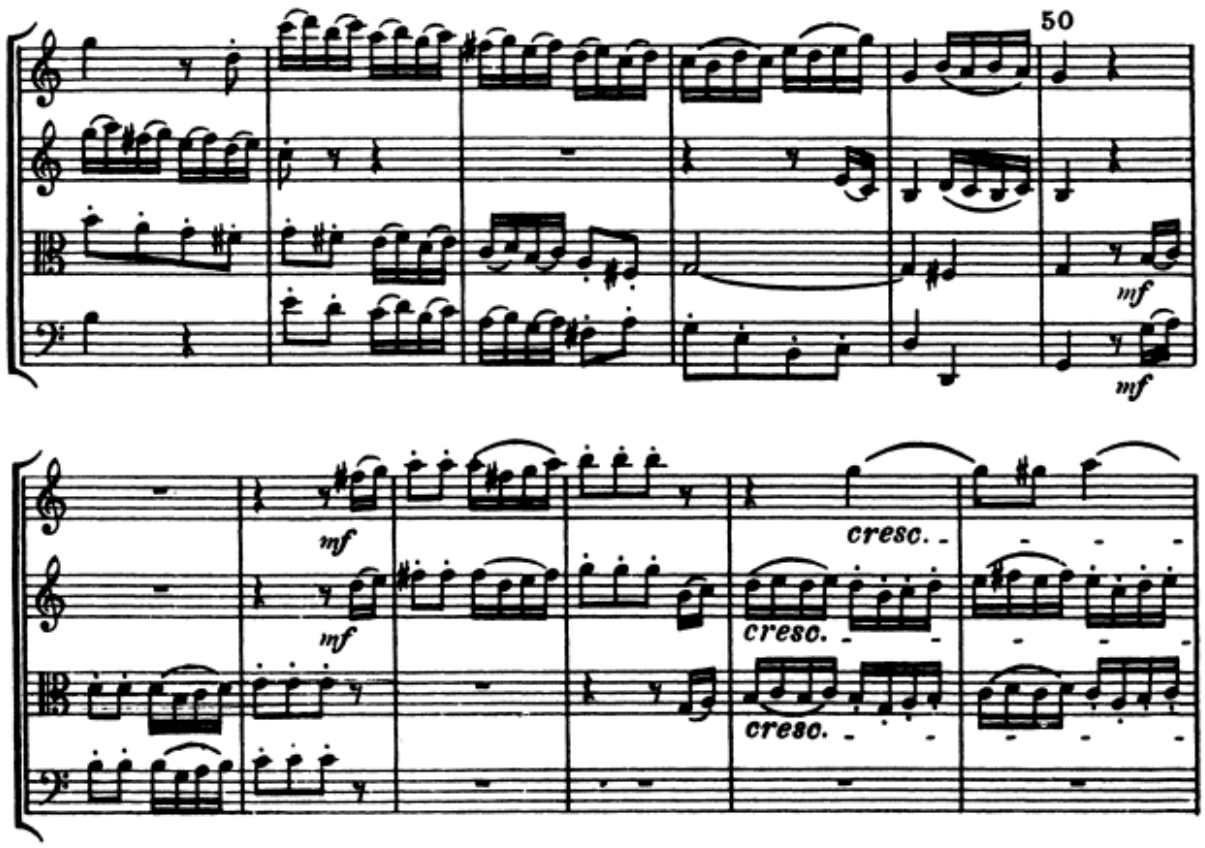


If the second violin and viola provide a declaration with their opening seven-note motive (m. 1) and its repetitions, the first violin adds its own commentary of feedback in its usual high register throughout the movement. The cello enriches the other instruments in the conversation

by joining in the statement of the default motive (mm. 32–34, 36–38, 86–88, and 108–10), in dialogue with the first violin (mm. 2, 4, 23–24, 39–45, 144–53, 162, 164, and 225–31), in dialogue with second violin and viola (mm. 46–52, 63–77, 95–100, 111–14, 124–26, 186–88, and 199–213), by adding a stable bass line (mm. 15–22, 63–81, 115–20, 128–33, 153–60, 175–86, and 213–23), and finally by incorporating its individual voice with fast sixteenth-note passage work (mm. 8–14, 134–38, and 168–74). The cellist has the final say in the piece with the same six-note motive featured by the first violin at the opening of the movement.

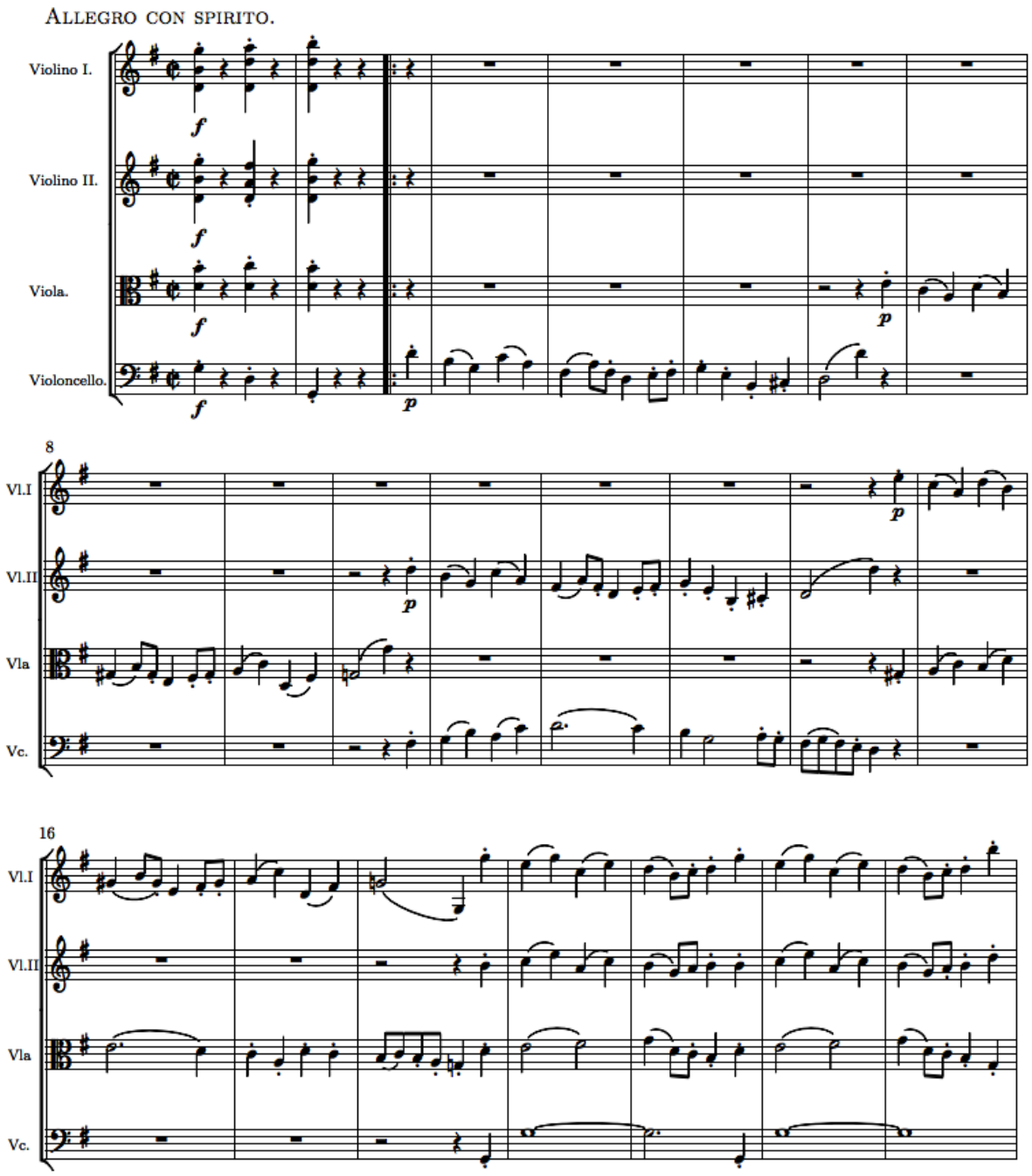
The second violin plays similar roles to the cello in the movement with a few significant differences. Its repeated statement of the motive in thirds with the viola plays a crucial role in this sonata-form movement. It is the primary theme of the exposition, also responsible for bringing the movement back full circle in the recapitulation at the pickup to m. 161. A variant of the first-measure motive can also be found in all instruments (mm. 50–54 and 186–90), introduced by the viola and cello in thirds, followed by first and second violin duo also in thirds (see Ex. 3.8). In fact, the second violinist supports the first violin a third below, not only in motivic development but in establishing the dominant of G as the new key in the closing section at the end of the exposition (mm. 59–77).

Example 3.8. Haydn, Op. 50, No. 2, IV, mm. 45–56



Another unique example of imitative counterpoint can be heard in the opening of Haydn's Op. 76, No. 1, first movement. Following three tonic–dominant–tonic chords, the solo cello begins with what comes across as a fugue subject. After four measures of the cello "subject," the viola answers, but just as listeners are expecting the cello to continue as in a fugue, it drops out, leaving the viola to run the course of a four-measure theme. The cello re-enters with the "countersubject" as the second violin joins with its "subject" entry. In other words, Haydn breaks the "subject" halfway and shares it with the cello and viola (mm. 3–10) and second violin and first violin (mm. 11–18). Contrary to expectations, a full-fledged fugue does not play out and the audience is left with casual conversational exchanges by all instruments (see Ex. 3.9).

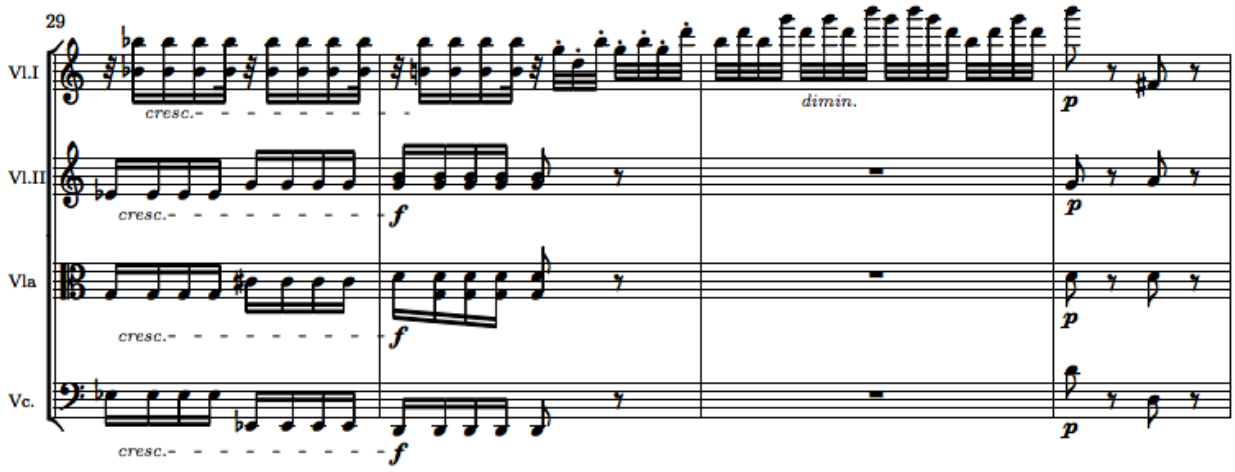
Example 3.9. Haydn, Op. 76, No. 1, I, mm. 1–22



Perhaps Haydn is toying with the "music box" effect that Boccherini had previously illustrated in his quartets, or perhaps Haydn wants to give all the players their versions of the theme to achieve ensemble diversity and equality. As the music continues to the next movement, though, Haydn gives the first violin written-out cadenzas in mm. 30–32 (see Ex. 3.10) and mm. 88–90. Nevertheless, Haydn's use of violin-concerto-like moments should be considered not as a setback to the maturing string quartet genre, but as the fruition of his past compositional experiments in the string quartet medium. As musicologist Mary Hunter writes,

> A survey of Haydn's quartet oeuvre suggests that other genres – the quatuor concertant and the quatuor brilliant, the concerto, the solo sonata, as well as aria, recitative, hymn, fugue, and various versions of minuet – all fed into Haydn's emerging sense of the string quartet… By the later quartets, not only had Haydn absorbed elements from a host of different genres into his string quartets, and not only was he quite accustomed to juxtaposing and interweaving them, but the quartets' "ownership" of these different idioms and textures could become a topic in itself.[68]

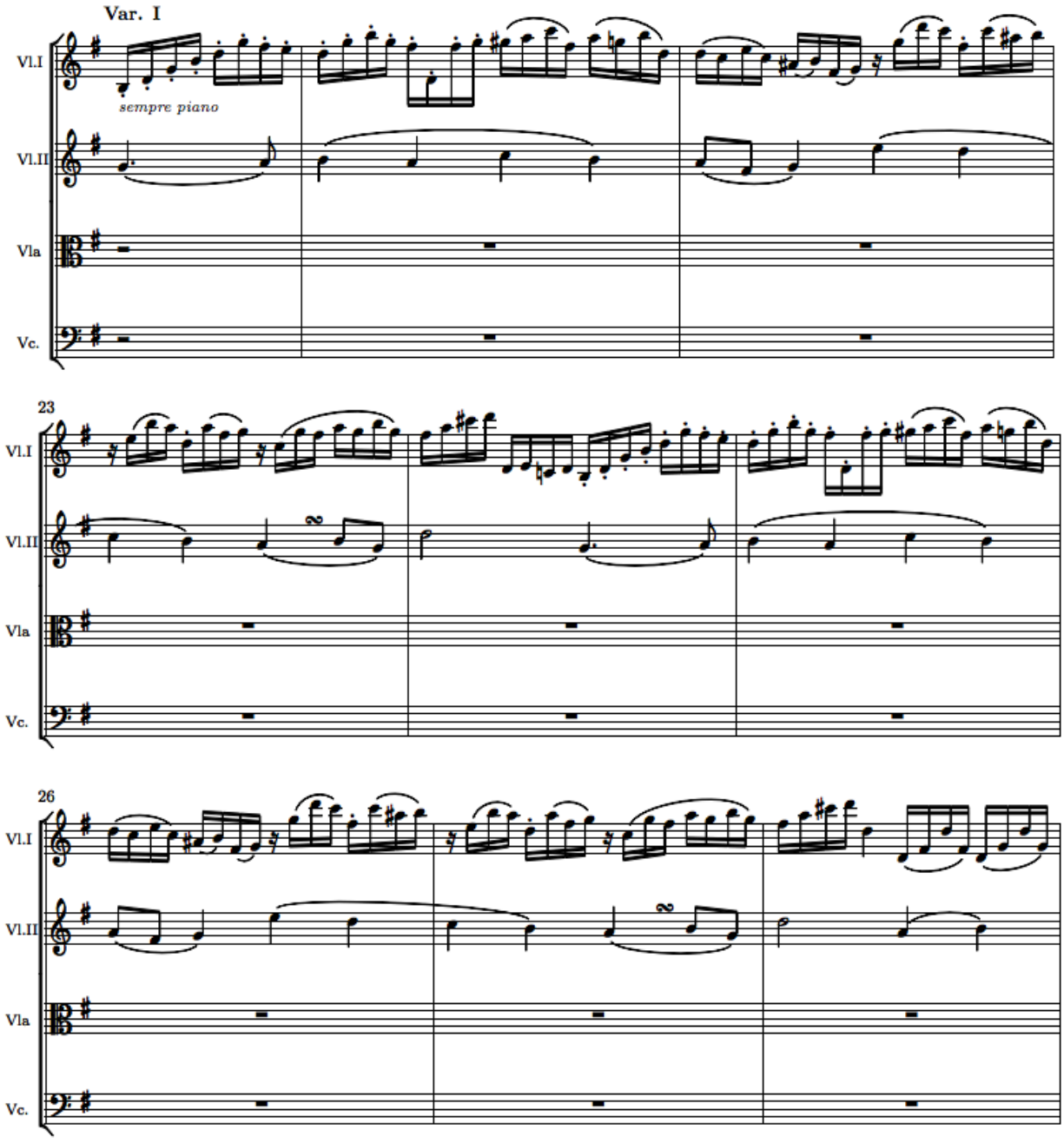
Example 3.10. Haydn, Op. 76, No. 1, II, mm. 29–32



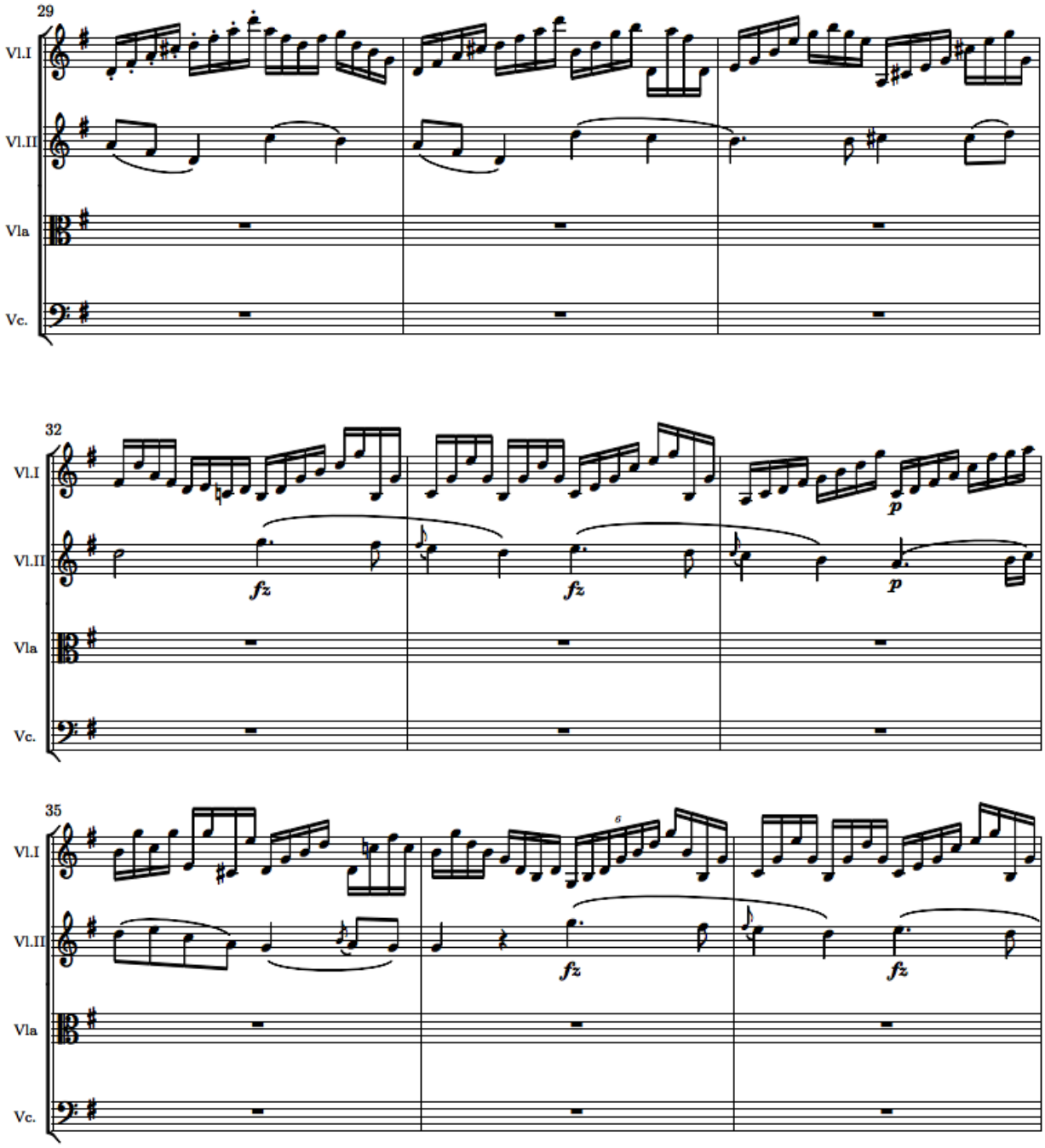
68. Mary Hunter, "The Quartets," in *The Cambridge Companion to Haydn*, ed. Caryl Clark (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 116–17.

Given this background, the last complete set of six quartets from Haydn, the Op. 76, should and can be viewed as his most egalitarian approach to string-quartet writing. Considering that much of his musical developmental process is mono-thematically driven, resulting in clear melodic lines, it is easy to make out which instrument is leading with the melody, even on an initial hearing of his music. This is especially true of the second movement of Op. 76, No. 3, known more famously as the Emperor's Hymn. Using a standard variation technique, Haydn capitalizes on each instrument's potential by assigning the tune to every instrument in turn. The first violin opens the movement with all other instruments harmonizing, then the viola and cello drop out for the first variation. It is now up to the second violin to carry the melody while the first violin ornaments it with virtuosic sixteenth-note figuration (see Ex. 3.11). This is the only variation in which the upper two strings are solely featured without the help of the lower instruments. The resulting sound is anything but peaceful and hymn-like, thanks to the busy notes of the first violin. The performers can certainly choose the sound or atmospheric effect of their choice, but for too many recorded performances of this famous set of variations, the first violinist can be heard having his or her solo virtuosic moment while the second violin duly performs the solo line with reverence. The cello and viola solos follow in the succeeding variations, before the first violin picks up the tune again in the final fourth variation. Although Haydn had given entire melodic lines to instruments other than the first violin in his previous quartets as has been the norm in his variation movements, never had he given each instrument its own soloistic variation in a single movement.

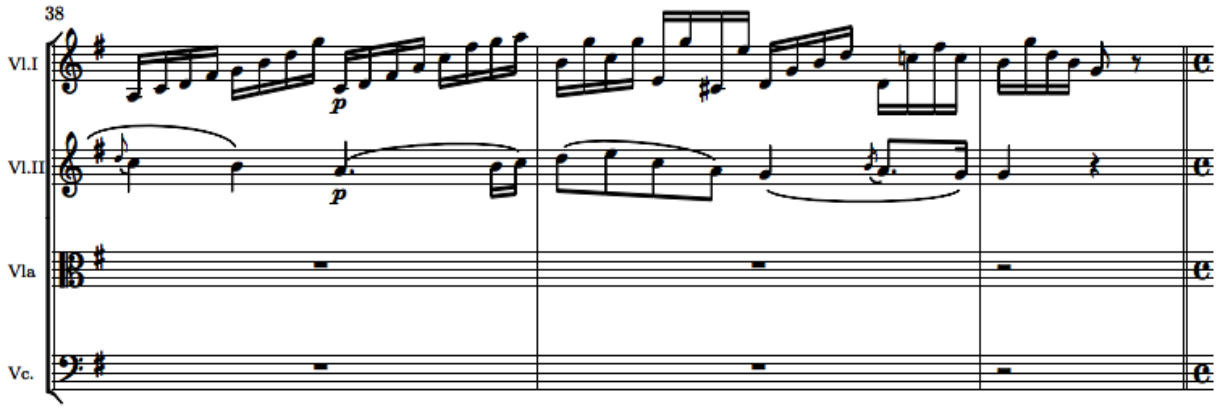
Example 3.11. Haydn, Op. 76, No. 3, II, mm. 20–40



Example 3.11, Continued



Example 3.11 Concluded

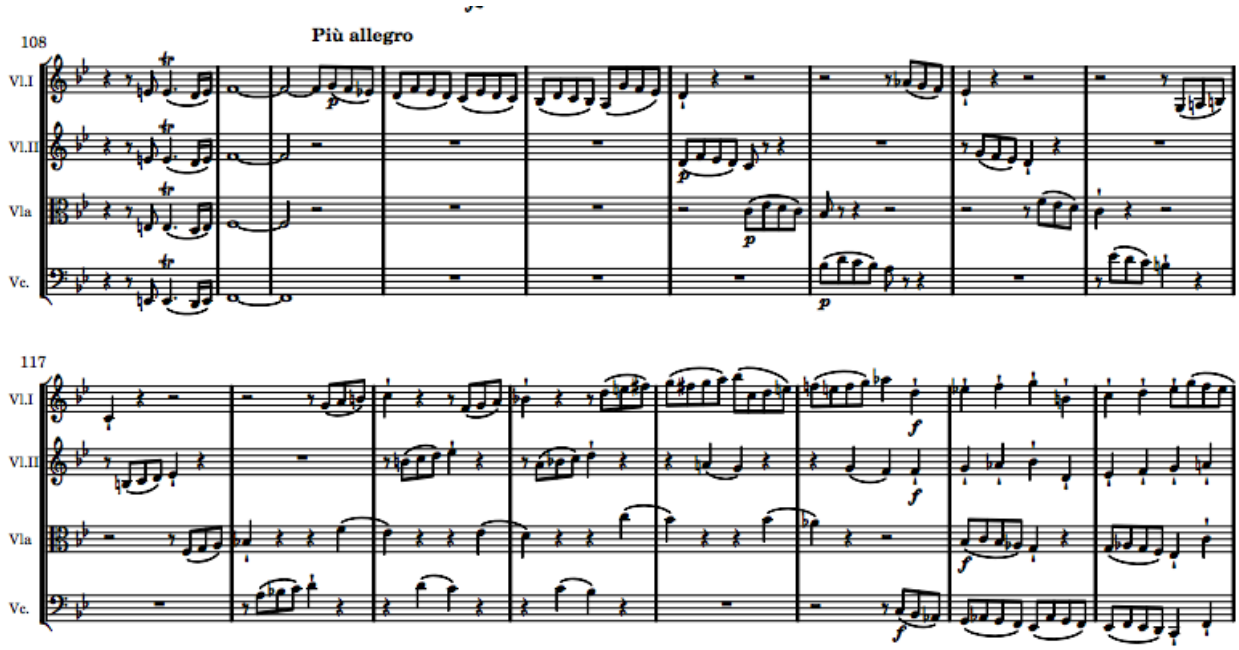


Another unique and special moment from Op. 76 occurs in the final movement of the fourth quartet, popularly nicknamed the "Sunrise" for its rising first violin line of the opening movement. The first violinist rises on the tonic, supposedly calling to mind the sun rising above the hemisphere. Another ascent follows in the dominant seventh, while the other instruments quietly hold on to their own chordal notes in whole notes. The rest of the movement unfolds around this rising melodic theme, which is at times turned upside down or divided among the different instruments.

Since the fugue finale of Op. 50, No. 4, Haydn had employed fugues, perhaps only for a momentary imitational exchange, in his quartets. There is one instance of an entire movement in strict canon in the Minuetto and Trio from Op. 76, No. 2. The two violins begin in octaves, starting the canon, while the two lower strings in octaves come in three beats later, in strict canonic imitation, but creating nothing close to a fully realized fugue. Also, in the fourth, rondo movement of the B♭ major quartet, Op. 76, No. 4, is an episode of what sounds like a fugue, beginning with the first violin all alone in m. 110 (see Ex. 3.12). The second violin follows, but only for brief five notes, followed by the viola, then cello, then again to first violin, and so on, all

playing the theme broken up into four- or five-note segments. If listeners do not have the score in front of them or performers to look at, they may not even notice that this passage is being played with all the instruments rotating.

Example 3.12. Haydn, Op. 76, No. 4, IV, mm. 108–24



Haydn's incredible output of sixty-eight string quartets spanning over four decades has earned him the respectable title as the Father of the String Quartet. Without getting into the technical verification of that title as in the previous chapters, Haydn's ceaseless endeavor into the inexhaustible possibilities of the string quartet for almost all of his compositional career "reflect the changes both in Haydn's own compositional habits and in the status and meaning of the string quartet during that near-half-century… these works range from galant to learned and passionate, from intensely original and inward looking to approachably public, and from folklike

to sublime."[69] His works were undoubtedly of great influence to his contemporaries and those that came after him. As we will examine in the next chapter, the most important composer to have been inspired by Haydn was Mozart, as Haydn's works gave him impetus to expand his compositional creativity that resulted in Mozart's brilliant, never-before-seen (or heard) works in his string quartets.

69. Hunter, "The Quartets," 112.

Chapter 4: Mozart's String Quartets

Two years before Haydn's Op. 20 was published, a teenaged Mozart began a journey of his own into the string-quartet repertoire. Mozart composed a total of twenty-three string quartets, thirteen of which were composed before 1774, and the remaining ten in the years 1782–90. Although the last ten quartets—"Haydn," "Hoffmeister," and "Prussian"—are the best-known and most compositionally mature works from his string-quartet output, his earlier works—K. 80, K. 155–160, and K. 168–173— should not be discounted simply because of their shorter length or lightness of character, or their composer's youth.

The four-movement string quartet in G major, K. 80, while by no means a representation of Mozart's best outcome from the genre, is a work that foreshadows the masterpieces to come in its lyricism, harmony, and thorough use of varied quartet texture. During the sixty-seven measures of the opening Adagio, eight different textural varieties make their appearance:

1. mm. 1–4: first-violin melody over eighth-note ostinato accompaniment in viola and cello.
2. m. 3: second-violin "intrusion" over the trio (first violin, viola, and cello); recurs three more times in mm. 11, 35, and 50.
3. mm. 5–8: the two violins are paired playing the melody (in thirds) while the viola and cello are paired as bass; reappears in mm. 24–28, 44–48, and 63–64 (mm. 5–8 is the only instance where the second violin is playing a third higher than the first violin).
4. mm. 15–16 and 54–55: first violin and viola are paired while cello has the bass line.
5. mm. 17–18 and 56–57: second violin and viola are paired while cello has the bass line.

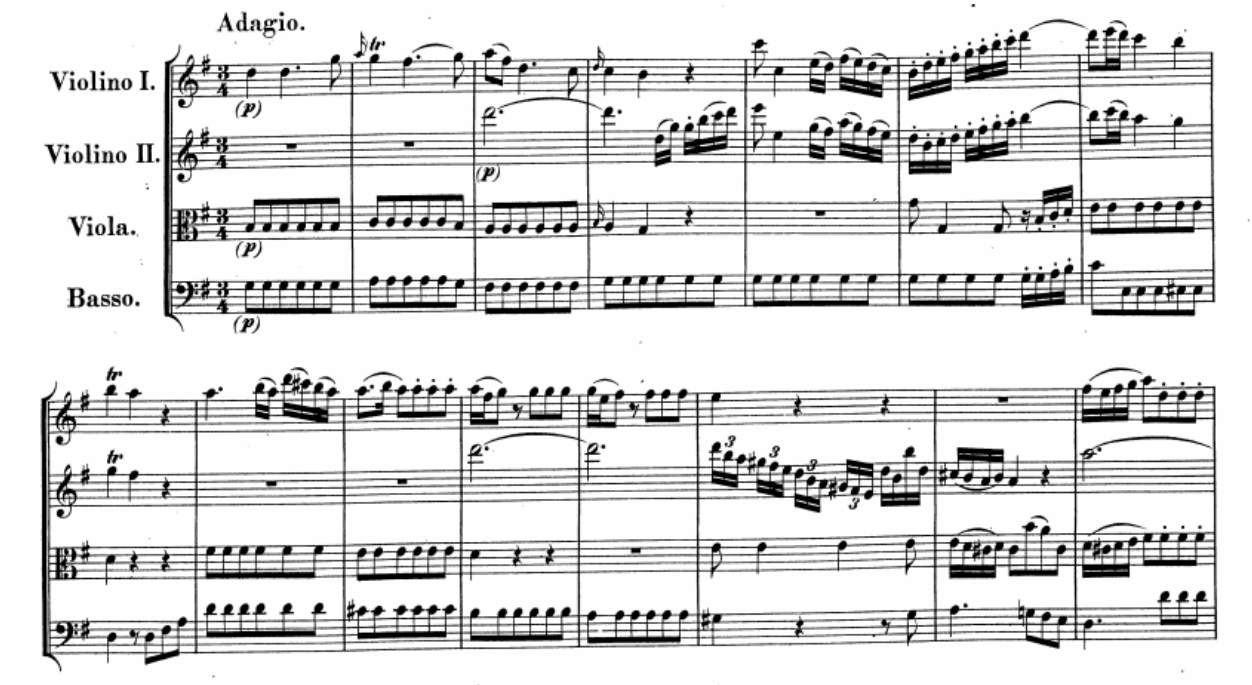
6. mm. 19–21 and 58–60: first-violin melody over bass provided by all three other instruments.

7. mm. 22–24 and 61–63: passing of motives, or dialogue among the instruments (cello and viola paired).

8. mm. 29–31: canonic entrance of voices in the order viola, second violin, and first violin over an eighth-note bass in the cello.

Furthermore, this movement defies the norms of its time in some remarkable features. In the first eight-measure phrase, the second violin makes an entrance with a high D above the melodic first-violin line (see Ex. 4.1). Traditionally, the three voices below the first violin rarely sound notes higher than those the first violin is playing; and even when a voice other the first violin takes over the melody, its melody line stays within its customary register and does not intrude into the first-violin range. However, in this Adagio, the second violin maintains the higher register for three measures from its first entrance; in addition, the first and second violin share melodic lines and sound as though they were one instrument playing continuously at certain points. In other words, the second violin is required to do similar virtuosic playing to the first violin throughout the Adagio, unlike the quartet works of the time that catered to amateur second-violin players.

Example 4.1, Mozart, K. 80, I, mm. 1–15



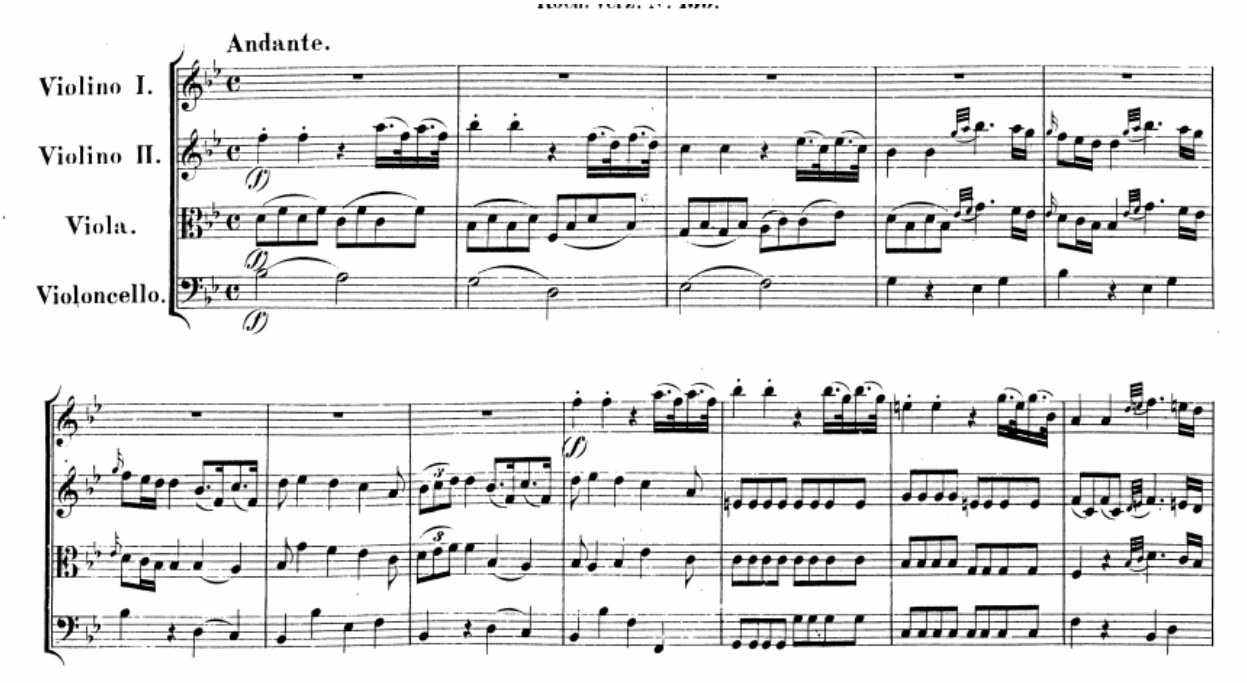
Two years after K. 80, Mozart composed a set of six quartets, K. 155–160 during his stay in Milan, Italy. Possibly written as part of his compositional portfolio to present to prospective Italian employers, these quartets are all in three movements, a typical Italian procedure of the period, and, as a group, are organized via a series of falling fifths: the quartets are in D, G, C, F, B♭, and E♭ major. After examining the autograph, the pianist and Mozart scholar John Irving concluded that in some sections of K. 155's first movement, the first violin and cello parts have clearly contrasting ink shades compared with the second violin and viola parts. This suggests that Mozart composed the outer parts before the inner parts, which "were filled in at a later stage of composition, after the essential strands, theme and bass, had been determined."[70] Fugal writing is

70. Irving, John, *Mozart: The 'Haydn' Quartets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 6.

also frequent in this set of quartets, although full-fledged fugues do not make their appearance until his next set of quartets, K. 168–173, perhaps as an additional selling point for his job-search portfolio.

In the string quartet, K. 159 in B♭ major, Mozart further expands the role of the second violin as melody bearer. The first movement, Andante, features a trio of voices for eight measures; here, it is the second violinist who is given the first theme, a lyrical melody floating over viola and cello accompaniment (see Ex. 4.2). The second violin also plays the return of the theme in the recapitulation.

Example 4.2. Mozart, K. 159, I, mm. 1–12



Almost a decade later in 1782, after not having written any string quartets since K. 173 in 1773, Mozart returned to the genre with the famous K. 387 in G major. The set of six quartets

published as Op. 10—K. 387, 421, 428, 458, 464, and 465—were dedicated to Haydn and described in Italian as *il frutto di una lunga, e laboriosa fatica,* "the fruits of a long and laborious effort."[71] Indeed, Mozart worked on these quartets for nearly three years, and his autograph manuscript shows the numerous sketches and revisions he went through before finalizing the music.[72] By now, Mozart had composed such great works as the Sinfonia Concertante for Violin, Viola, and Orchestra, the C-minor Mass, and the Italian opera *Idomeneo*, so it is astonishing that he experienced great difficulty in composing for just four stringed instruments.

Although only a few direct connections may be present, Haydn's Op. 33 published in 1781 is said to have made a lasting influence on Mozart's Op. 10 quartets.[73] The most notable homage to Haydn was Mozart taking the *siciliano* G-major theme of the finale from Op. 33, No. 5 and reinterpreting it in D minor in the last movement of K. 421. Whereas Haydn keeps his variations all in G major with only a few textural variations in the ensemble, Mozart explores into the parallel major, gives a prominent solo line to the viola, and uses the second violin as rhythmic and dynamic impetus to move forward and create a sense of urgency. One other thematic connection may be made with the Minuetto of Mozart's K. 428, which is in the same key as the Scherzo movement of Haydn's Op. 33, No. 2 in E♭ major.

Mozart's determination to make all four voices heard by giving them ample opportunities to declaim significant melodic motives and melodic lines is well represented in K. 387. Not only

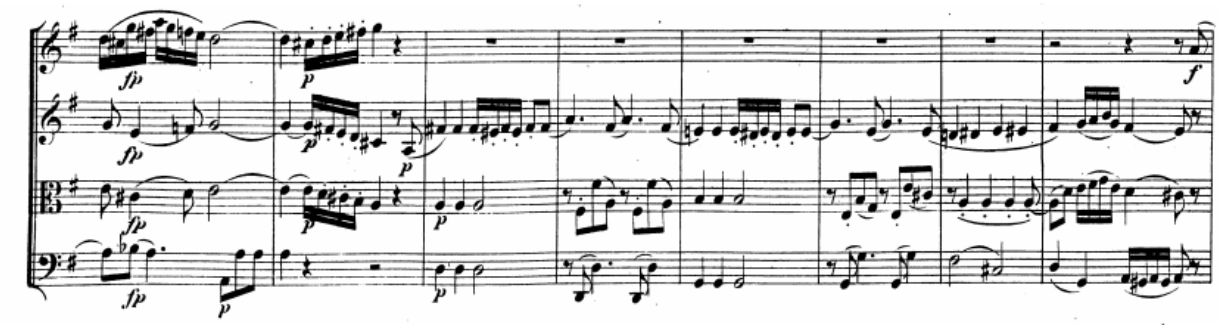
71. Irving, *Mozart*, 14.

72. Ibid. For a discussion, see the important study of this autograph by Alan Tyson in "Mozart's 'Haydn' Quartets: The Contribution of Paper-Studies," in *The String Quartets of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven: Studies of the Autograph Manuscripts*, Isham Library Papers III, ed. Christoph Wolff (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1980) 179–90.

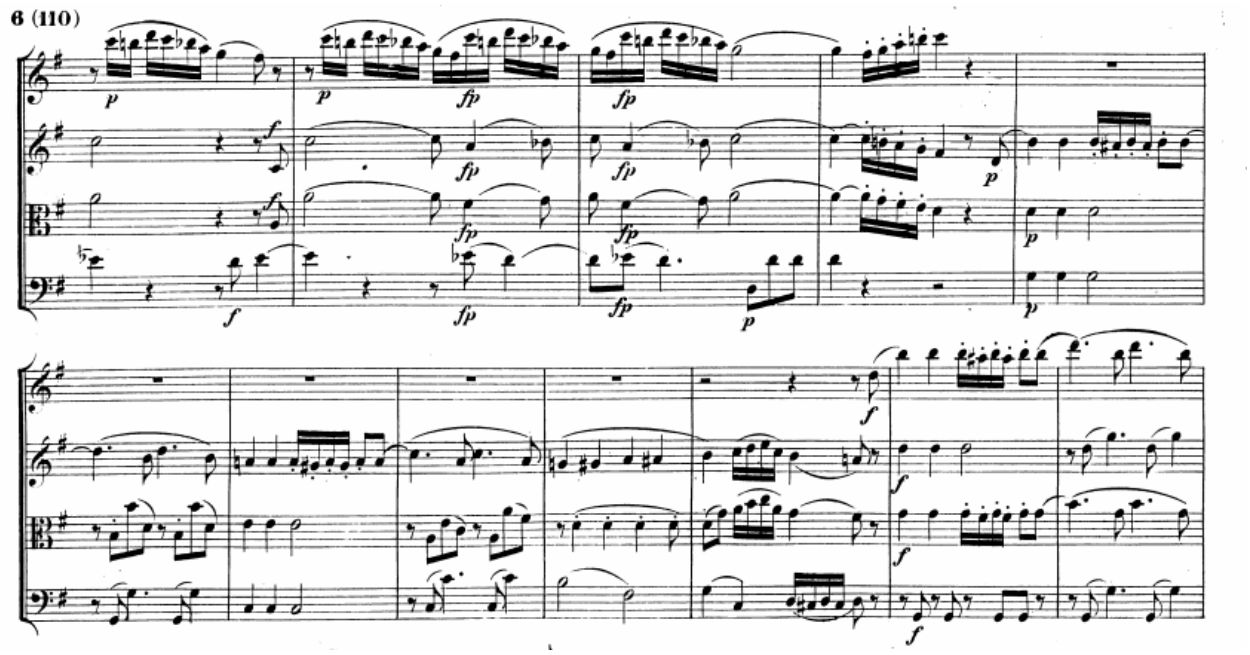
73. See Ibid., 80–81 for a discussion on whether Haydn really had an influence in Mozart's Op. 10 string quartets. Cliff Eisen and Stanley Sadie write, in "Mozart (Johann Chrysostom) Wolfgang Amadeus," *Grove Music Online,* ed. Deane Root, accessed February 26, 2017, www.oxfordmusiconline.com, "That Mozart sought to emulate Haydn's quartets Op. 33, but not to imitate them slavishly, can hardly be doubted: like Haydn's, Mozart's quartets are characterized by textures conceived not merely in four-part harmony, but as four-part discourse, with the actual musical ideas linked to a freshly integrated treatment of the medium."

must the second violin, as well as the viola and cello, fluently execute intricate rhythmic and chromatic lines as much as the first violinist, the second violinist introduces the secondary theme in mm. 25–30 (see Ex. 4.3a) and its return in the recapitulation in mm. 133–38 (see Ex. 4.3b). Furthermore, Mozart also employs a fugue for its final movement and has the second violin usher in the primary subject from the opening. What stands out more in these Op. 10 quartets than his earlier works is that in Mozart's mature string-quartet writing, the distinction between melody and accompaniment become less and less important as all four voices serve independent and interdependent roles.

Example 4.3a. Mozart, K. 387, I, mm. 23–30



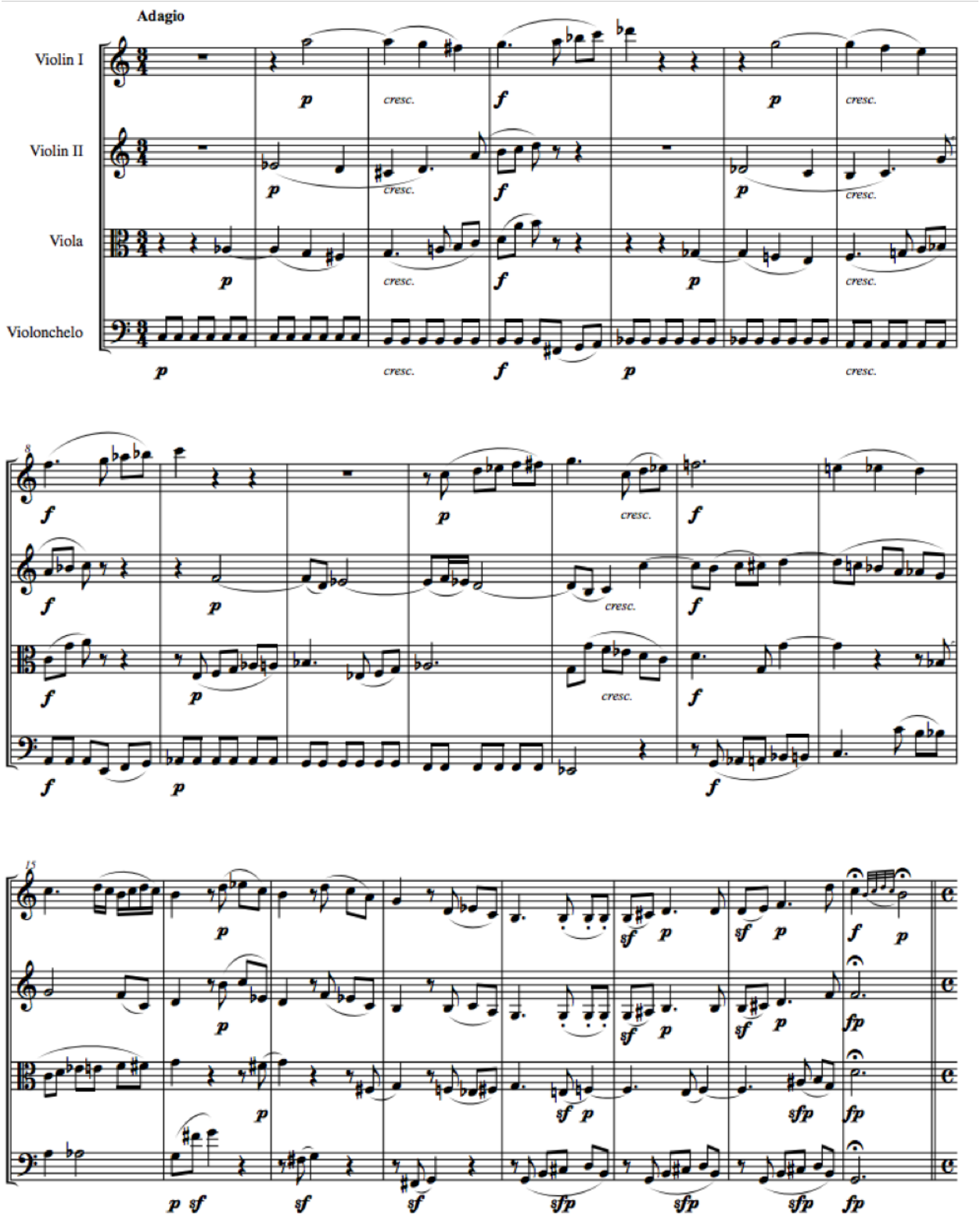
Example 4.3b. Mozart, K. 387, I, mm. 129–40



The opening Adagio of K. 465 (see Ex. 4.4) is a fitting example of where the four instruments are closely knit together but retain their distinctiveness, making them equally significant in the first twenty-two measures. First, there is the issue of tonality. Although the slow introduction as a whole is governed by a stepwise descending bass from C to G, a conventional feature of slow introductions, Mozart's use of startling dissonances disguises it while delving into a previously uncharted chromatic territory.[74]

74. This slow introduction was so radical that even several decades after its composition, early-nineteenth-century critics were still debating whether Mozart wrote these dissonances by mistake. Critics such as Fétis, Leduc, Weber, and Sarti all tried their hand at providing their own "correct" version of the introduction. For a discussion see John Irving, *Mozart: The Haydn Quartets*, 76–78, and Ian Bent's "G. Weber: 'A Particularly Remarkable Passage in a String Quartet in C by Mozart [K. 465 ("Dissonance")]' (1832)," in *Music Analysis in the Nineteenth Century*: *Volume 1 Fugue, Form, and Style*, ed. Ian Bent (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 157–83.

Example 4.4. Mozart, K. 465, I, mm. 1–22



The quartet's nickname, "Dissonance," rightfully comes from the Adagio introduction, where the only hint at the key of C comes from the repeated C's in the cello. The strange, tonally unclear opening four-measure phrase progression of C–A♭^{6}–G^6 is repeated in mm. 5–8 a whole tone lower, on B♭, making the tonic even more ambiguous. There is a hint of a G-major passing-cadence gesture in m. 16 and a definitive dominant-seventh cadence in m. 22, but the Adagio never releases its tension by camouflaging the tonic C . Without a strong tonic bearing ground to cushion them, the four voices seem to independently meander, come together, and then dissipate in mm. 1–5, and repeats this gesture again in mm. 5–9. The search for the tonic continues especially for the cello, where after the first eight measures, it is met only with more chromaticism. The cellist meanders into a chromatic stepwise-descending progression of f^6–E♭^{6}–d^6–c^6, where the roots of each chord are played by the second violin, until it reaches the dominant preparation on m. 16.

Melodically speaking, the two violins and viola play a chromatic descending pattern for two measures that turns around and leaps upward. The cello also follows the same descending and ascending pattern, but it is more difficult to notice the similarity since it moves at a slower rate than the other instruments. Moreover, the staggered entrances and the mostly different rate of movement from each instrument can hardly be described as homogeneous. Nevertheless, the repeated rhythmic eighth notes of the cello are the key to keeping the tonal "Dissonance" from dissipating into open air, as they are the only activity the ears can rely on for stability. Even when the cello finally lets go of the repeated eighth notes in m. 12, not a beat passes by where Mozart proceeds without having the eighth-note pulsation in the other instruments. In this way, the pulses of all the instruments are interlocked; at the same time, they are rhythmically

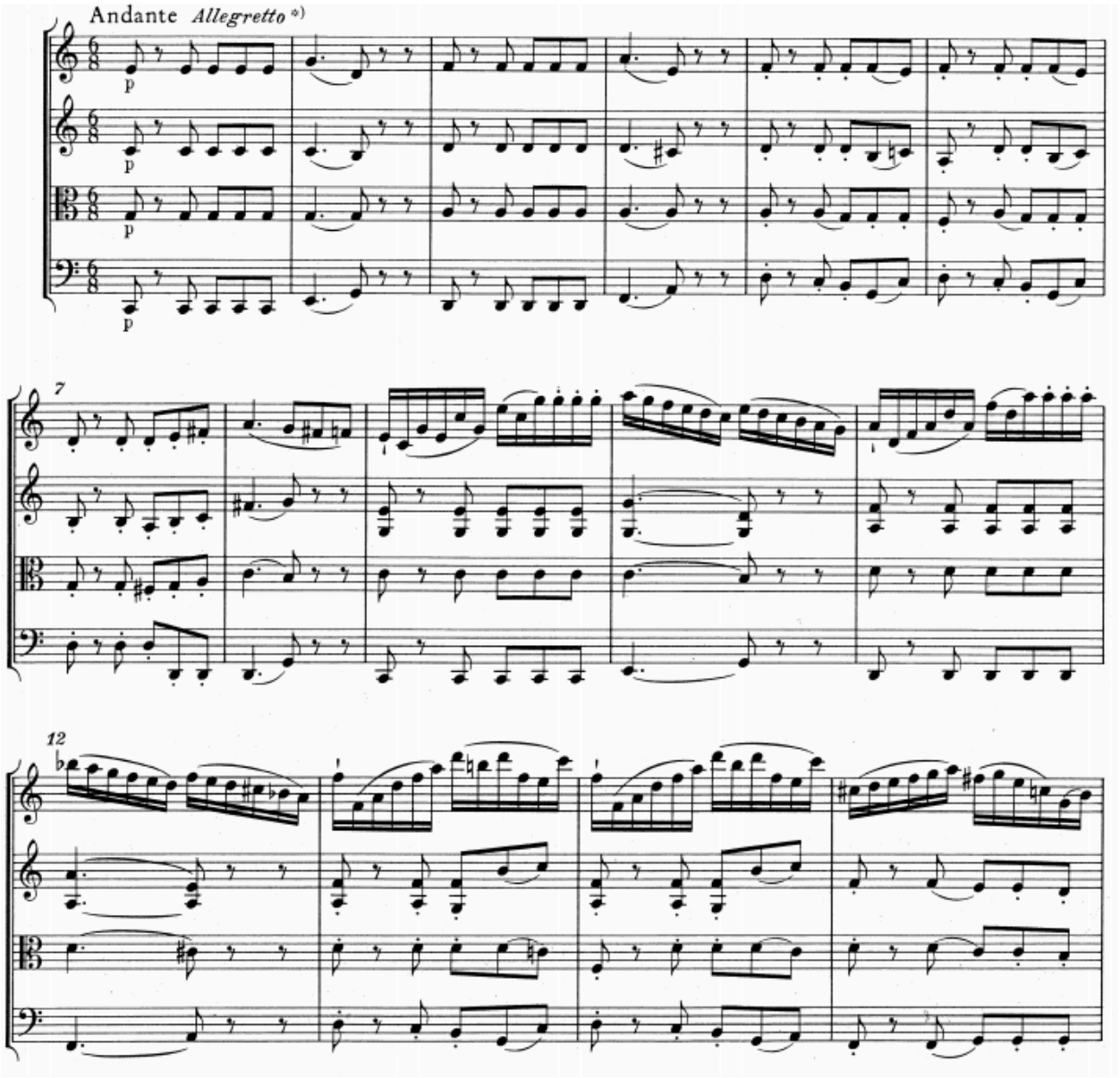
independent for these few measures. Then, at last, all the instruments come together harmonically and rhythmically from m. 16 onward.

The mature string quartets of Mozart frequently showcase all four instruments performing with a sense of unity and interdependency that the distinction between melody and accompaniment or the ideal of equal distribution of parts become less and less significant. Such interdependency of parts is well represented in the last work of the three "Prussian" quartets. While known for their difficult cello parts, these three quartets have been under the shadow of his "Haydn" quartets although they nonetheless exemplify Mozart's maturing artistry and limitless creativity.

The unassuming Andante second movement from Mozart's last quartet, K. 590 in F Major, begins with a simple, homophonic, eight-measure statement of the theme.[75] When the first variation begins in m. 9, the homophonic theme is heard in the lower three voices. Even though the first violin flourishes on top with busy sixteenth-note runs, the theme is given to the second violin who is reinforcing the theme with double stops (see Ex. 4.5). By adding a fourth voice to the theme in the variation, Mozart continues the four-part texture of the opening theme in the proceeding variations. When the theme returns in m. 63, the extra voice occurs in the double stops of the first violin while the viola introduces a new short-long, short-long filigree material. It is worth noting that beginning in m. 9, the sixteenth-note passages are almost continuous in this movement, except for a few moments of homophonic iteration of theme. Mara

75. For an in-depth analysis and discussion of this movement, see Roman Ivanovitch's "Recursive/Discursive: Variation and Sonata in the Andante of Mozart's String Quartet in F, K. 590," in *Music Theory Spectrum* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 145–64.

Example 4.5. Mozart, K. 590, II, mm. 1–15



Parker notes that these continues sixteenth-note passages "reveal a fluidity of line rarely found in late-eighteenth century works," and such "handing off" of passages occur not in any particular pairing of instruments, but among all instruments.[76] The theme also, is given to all instruments

76. Parker, *String Quartet*, 254.

throughout the movement, not only in the four-part texture as mentioned above, but in varying three-voice (e.g, the second violin, viola, and cello in mm.15–23) and two-voice (e.g., the second violin and viola in mm. 25–30) variations.

From the very first work in the genre, K. 80, to his last K. 590 string quartet, Mozart reveals a creative new world of string quartet compositions unlike any other. While it is true that Haydn was a great inspiration for him, Mozart undoubtedly presents his own new style of string quartets to the genre that was revered by other composers, theorists, and historians. By integrating each instrument of the quartet to the needs of the music, and not the other way around as is the case in first-violin centric music, Mozart's quartets unquestionably gratify the players, critics, and listeners alike.

Chapter 5: Beethoven's Early String Quartets

Beethoven was already 27 years old when he began composing string quartets. Until then, he had written several string trios and piano trios, two piano concertos, a few works for winds, and a handful of sonatas for the piano, cello, and violin. His first works in string-only chamber music were string trios for violin, viola, and cello, a genre largely unexplored by Haydn and Mozart. He had completed five string trios before he began work on string quartets, but never came back to the trio genre. Beethoven also had one string quintet under his belt, Op. 4 in E♭ major, before he wrote the quartets, and he completed three more quintets in his life, all works featuring two violas. As is common knowledge, although Beethoven was influenced by Haydn and Mozart's quartets, his challenges in writing for a medium without a piano or an orchestra to lean back on was confronted first with the early string trios and quintets.[77]

This is not to say that Beethoven did not attempt to write string quartets prior to his Op. 18 set.[78] While studying with the famous contrapuntist and pedagogue Johann Georg Albrechtsberger, Beethoven made a few sketches for string trios and string quartets.[79] There was even a formal request to compose quartets from Count Apponyi, the same nobleman who commissioned Haydn's Op. 71 and 74 and had

> asked Beethoven to compose a quartet for him for a given compensation, Beethoven not yet having written a piece in this genre. The Count declared that contrary to custom he did not want to have exclusive possession of the quartet for half a year before publication, nor did he ask that it be dedicated to him, etc. In

77. David Wyn Jones, "Beethoven and the Viennese Legacy," in *Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet*, 211.

78. On the question of what Beethoven's first string quartet was, Michael E. Broyles writes in depth about a question raised by Gustav Nottebohm, a nineteenth-century authority on Beethoven's sketches, on whether Beethoven's string quartet arrangement of the Piano Sonata Op. 14, No. 1 was in fact initially conceived as a string quartet. For an extended discussion on this topic, see Michel E. Broyles, "Beethoven's Sonata Op. 14, No. 1, Originally for Strings?" in *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 23, no. 3 (Autumn, 1970): 405–19.

79. Joseph Kerman, *The Beethoven Quartets* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979), 8.

> response to repeated urgings by me [Dr. Franz Wegeler, an old friend and first biographer], Beethoven twice set about the task, but the first effort resulted in a grand violin Trio (Op. 3), the second in a violin Quintet (Op. 4).[80]

Unlike in string trios, where the viola could fill in broken chords while the violin and cello shared melody and bass, the string quartet presented new textural challenges for Beethoven where "the four instruments of the quartet … are always individuals, always sensitive, [and] always exposed."[81]

Faced with these challenges, Beethoven worked exclusively on the quartets for about two years, 1798 to 1800. He completed the first three in 1799 and the rest by fall 1800, at the same time as Haydn completed his Op. 76 and Op. 77. Whether Beethoven had seen and studied Haydn's quartets while composing his Op. 18 set is unknown, but Beethoven's musical language, even in his earliest exploration into the genre, "reflect[s] a general knowledge of the quartet repertoire from the 1780s and early 1790s rather than an exclusive knowledge of one striking set."[82] Nevertheless, one can easily anticipate the amount of pressure he faced in composing string quartets where Mozart's six quartets dedicated to Haydn and the "Prussian" quartets, as well as his master Haydn's late quartets including the "Emperor" and "Sunrise," were towering over him with great expectations.[83]

Of Beethoven's sixteen complete string quartets, three early quartets will be studied in this chapter that are representative of his evolving style as a string quartet composer. Even within just one set of quartets, the Op. 18, which are akin to the Haydn and Mozart quartets, Beethoven demonstrates a transformation in the involvement of the second violin as well as the viola and

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80. Alexander Wheelock Thayer, *Life of Ludwig van Beethoven* Vol. 1, trans. Henry Edward Krehbiel (New York: The Beethoven Association, 1921): 187.

81. Kerman, *Beethoven Quartets*, 13.

82. Jones, "Viennese Legacy," 210–11.

83. Kerman, *Beethoven Quartets*, 11–12.

cello. While the F Major Quartet, No.1 seeks to engage the inner voices in ways similar to that of Mozart (e.g., by distributing the thematic material among them that is integrated seamlessly into the whole), in the slow introduction to the finale of the B♭ Major Quartet, No. 6, one cannot single out any instrument over the other as it organically, as if stemming out from one body, branches out in an intense dramatic unfolding. Finally, the last excerpt from Op. 59, No. 2, is an example of Beethoven taking a big leap forward, even foreshadowing his late quartets, and demands all instruments their highest artistic and instrumental virtuosity. At this point in his artistic career, concerns over first-violin dominance or equality of parts have become a thing of the past, and the issues of thematic transformation, harmonic and emotional drama have taken over as unveiled in the *Molto Adagio* second movement.

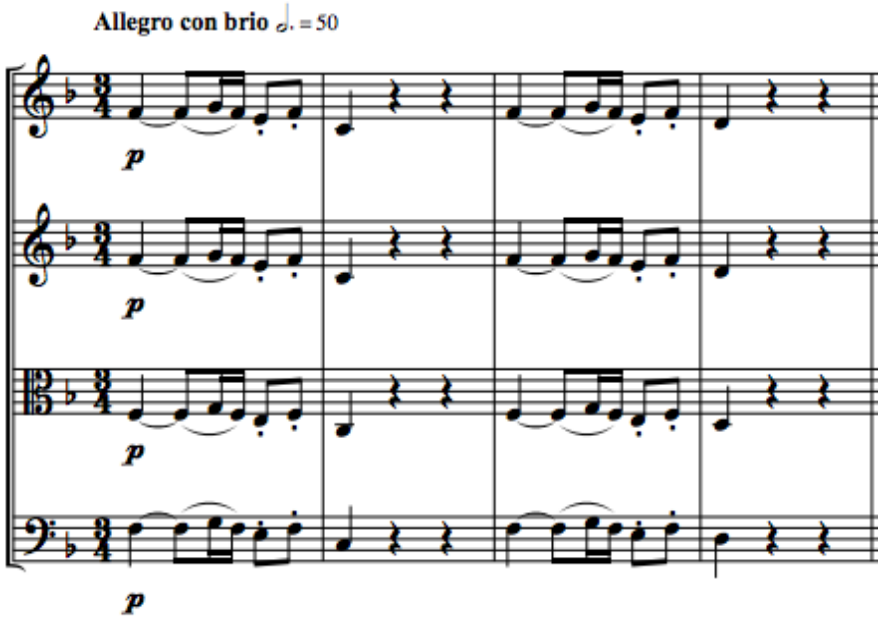
Op. 18, No. 1

Sketches of the Op. 18 quartets survive in a slightly different order from the published numbers.[84] Although little is known about Nos. 4 and 6, scholars conclude that the first quartet to be composed was No. 3 in D major, then No. 1 in F major, No. 2 in G major, and No. 5 in A major. Then he extensively revised Nos. 1–3 before they were published in 1801. The F-major quartet was second in line of composition, but Beethoven placed it first in the set, following a suggestion from his friend Ignaz Schuppanzigh.[85] In any case, the choice is not surprising, since the F-major quartet is the most impressive and longest piece of the six. Consequently, this quartet is also the most celebrated from the set.

84. Ibid., 9.
85. Ibid., 30.

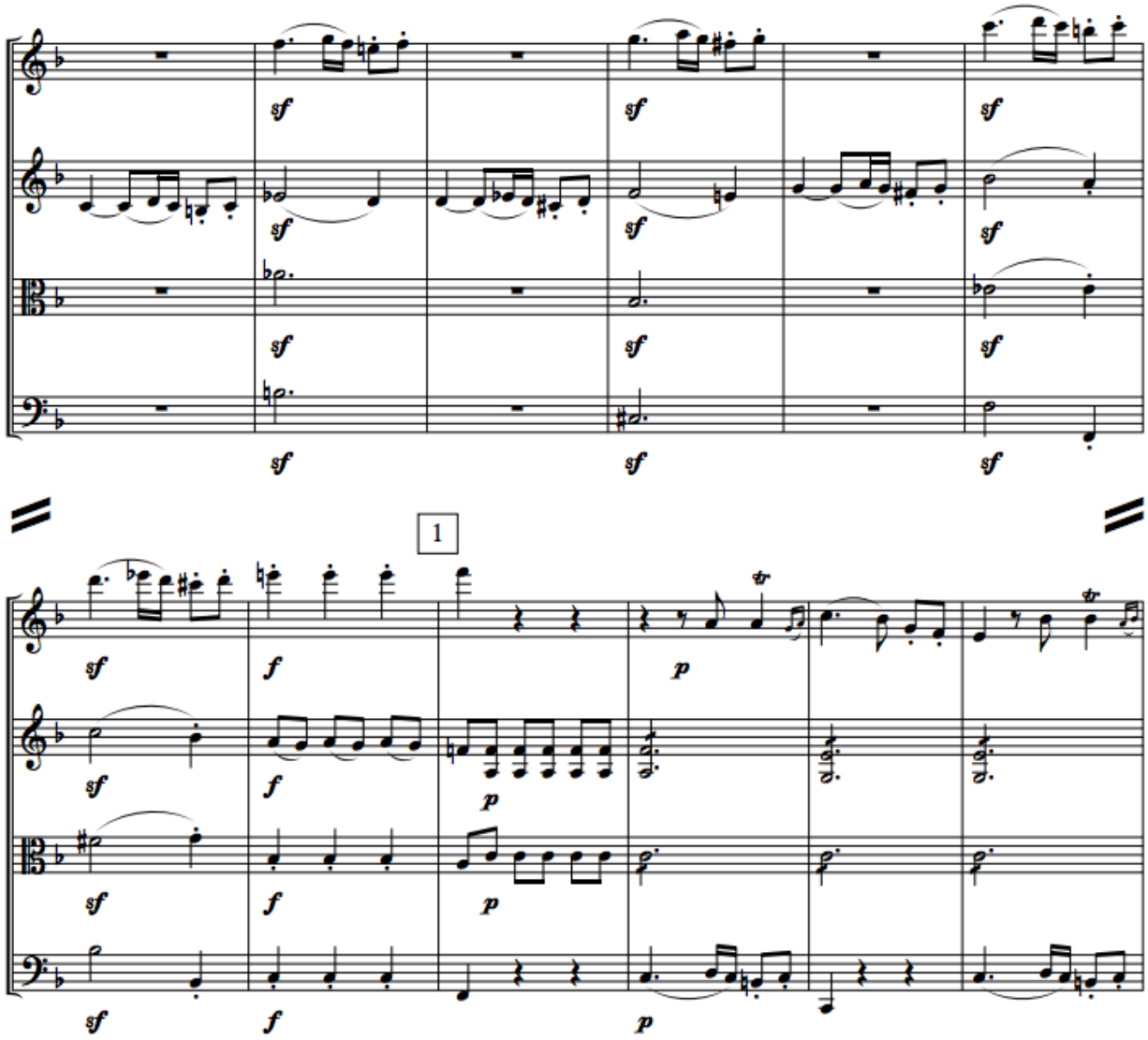
A single turn-figure motive dominates the first movement, appearing more than a hundred times (see Ex. 5.1). Simple as it looks and sounds, it took Beethoven nine different attempts at the figure before becoming content with the version we know.[86] The Allegro con brio movement opens with a unison declaration of the turn-motive, surprisingly enough in *piano*. When it returns in m. 9, the volume is raised to *forte*, followed by five measures of a harmonically unstable rising turn-motive sequence in the first violin. The ear may pick up this sequence initially, but the special harmony underneath is what makes this passage unsettling despite its brevity. It is a line with an intention not to spotlighting the first violin, but to carefully bridge the two different diminished seventh chords, $C^{\sharp o}7$ and $F^{\sharp o}7$, underneath.

Example 5.1. Beethoven, Op. 18, No. 1, I, mm. 1–4. Opening turn-figure motive



86. Michael Steinberg, "Notes on the Quartets," in *The Beethoven Quartet Companion,* ed. Robert Winter and Robert Martin (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 151.

Example 5.2. Beethoven, Op. 18, No. 1, I, mm. 21–32



Once more, the music dives into harmonically unstable territory for five measures, but this time around, the second violin begins with the turn-motive in dialogue with the first violin (see Ex. 5.2). Then the harmonies come together to close firmly in a perfect authentic cadence in m. 29. No fewer than fifteen of the first twenty-nine measures are saturated with the turn-figure motive. With such intense motivic interplay layered on top of harmonically unstable diminished-

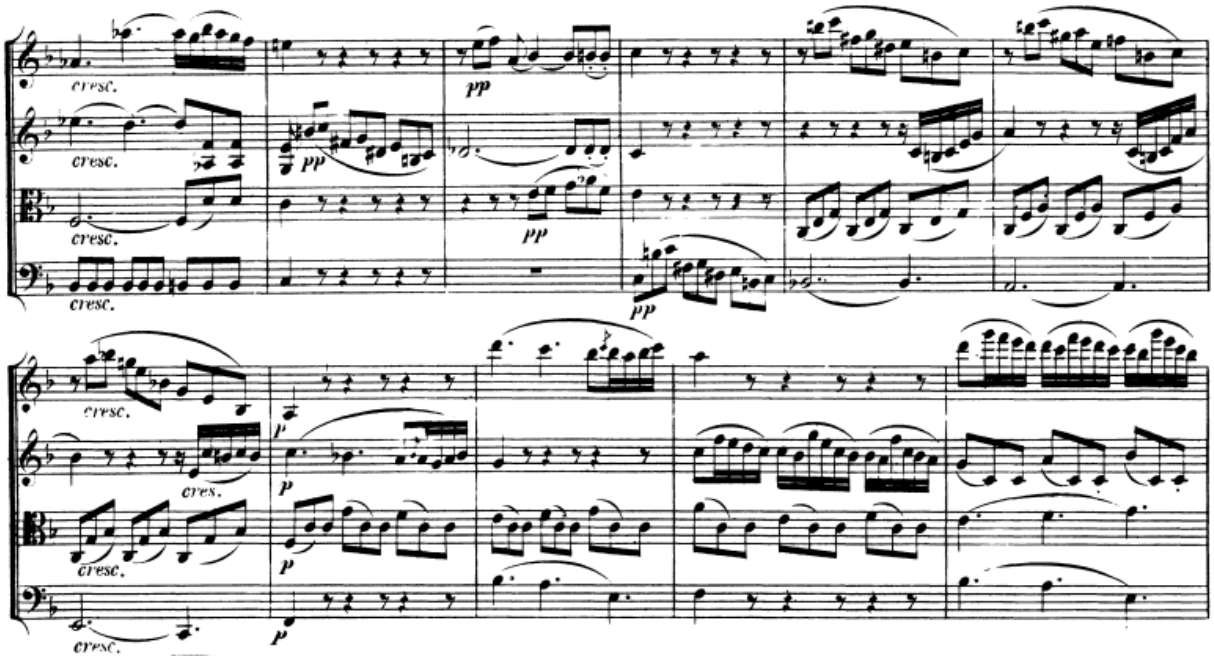
7th chords, there is no room to ponder a dominant instrument versus accompaniment, unequal distribution of parts, etc. Such issues become irrelevant when the music is propelling listeners and performers alike to "hear" the big picture and not any individual. One cannot separate any part from each other but is forced, with awe, to grapple with Beethoven's musical progress.

The same is true of the following slow movement, Adagio affettuoso ed appassionato, known to have been inspired by the lovers' tomb scene from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet.*[87] The movement is drenched in melodramatic harmonies, dynamic and emotional contrasts, as well as sigh motifs. Although the beautiful cantabile opening tune is carried solely by the first violin while the rest of the ensemble pulsate in triplets throughout, as the music progresses, the roles of the other instruments become crucial to the dramatic unfoldment. After the cello receives the tune from the first violin in m. 14, it is now up to the second violin to introduce new melodic and thematic material that will propel the music forward (see Ex. 5.3). Beginning with descending chromatic triplets in the dominant of the new key in m. 20, a hopeful secondary theme and its variation in F major are introduced by the second violin in mm. 26 and 28.

Beethoven gives the second violin the task of introducing new thematic materials several times in the set. For example, in the C-minor quartet, No. 4, I, the second violin introduces the second melodic theme in E♭ major in m. 34, and in the following Scherzo, the second violin opens the movement with a fugue-like theme that is imitated by all the other instruments in time. The same is true of the second movement of the quartet No. 3 in D major: the B♭-major Andante con moto opens with a four-part chorale; but the melodic, moving line is given to the second violin while the other instruments support with mostly homorhythmic harmonic lines.

87. Joseph Kerman in *The Beethoven Quartets*, 36, refers to Karl Amenda, Beethoven's friend who had possessed a manuscript copy of the quartet. Amenda is said to recount Beethoven ssaying, "that he composed the piece with the vault scene of *Romeo and Juliet* in mind," of which Gustav Nottebohm "was able to read "*les derniers soupirs"* over an early sketch for the end of the movement."

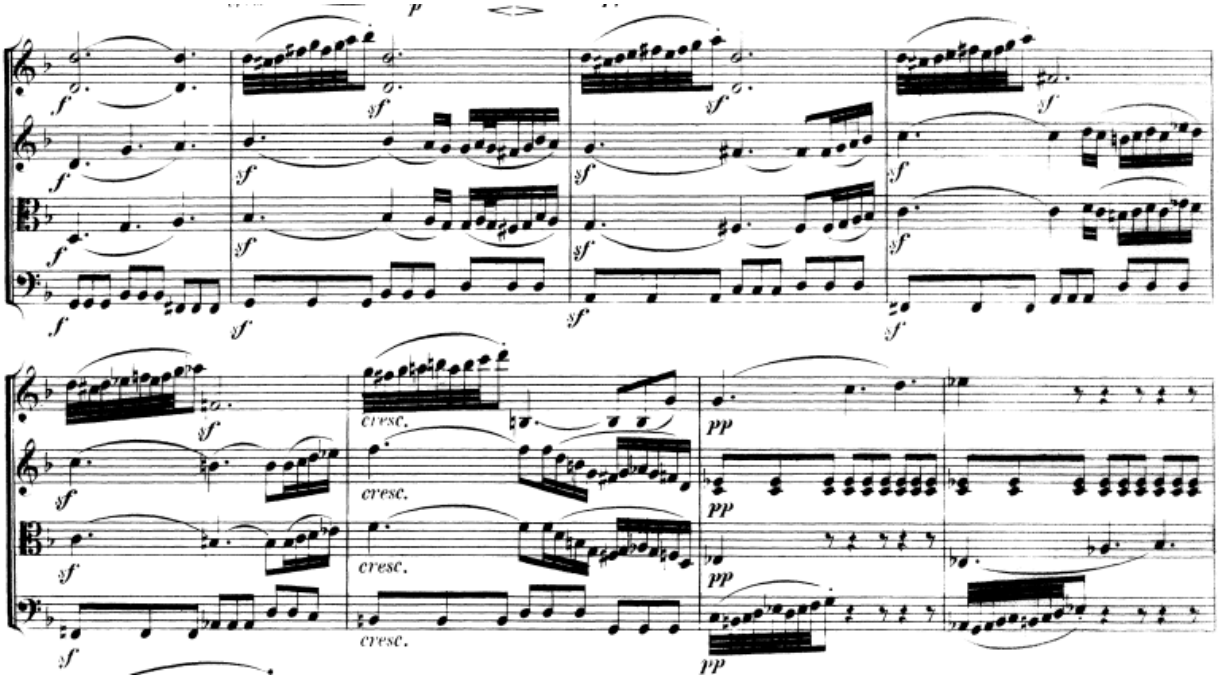
Example 5.3. Beethoven, Op. 18, No. 1, II, mm. 19–31



Going back to the D-minor second movement of the first quartet, a development section ensues that is brief but filled with dynamic and thematic contrasts. What began as an extension of the closing material of the exposition leads into an intense thematic passage led by the second violin and viola; and for the first time, the dynamic is *forte* with *sforzandi* in almost every measure (see Ex. 5.4). The cello holds the group together with steady, but assertive eighth notes while the first violin adds to the fury with thirty-second-note figurations accented with *sforzandi.* The vigorous theme simmers down to a *pianissimo* when the first violin picks up the tune in m. 54; and the music stays quiet into the recapitulation until all parts have a *subito forte* with the first-violin theme in m. 67. The cello continues its eighth-note bass, and the second violin and viola are paired for thirty-second-note runs marked *forte*.

As one can hear and "see," the second violin, as well as the viola and cello, are treated without any discernible inequality or discrimination in comparison with the first violin. Not only do all the instruments lead the music with thematic material; their equality is an essential ingredient in the emotional discourse throughout the piece. Beethoven, even at the earliest stage of his quartet-writing career, was able to fully communicate his expressive musical mastery through the harmony, distribution, and integration of parts.

Example 5.4. Beethoven, Op. 18, No. 1, II, mm. 48–55

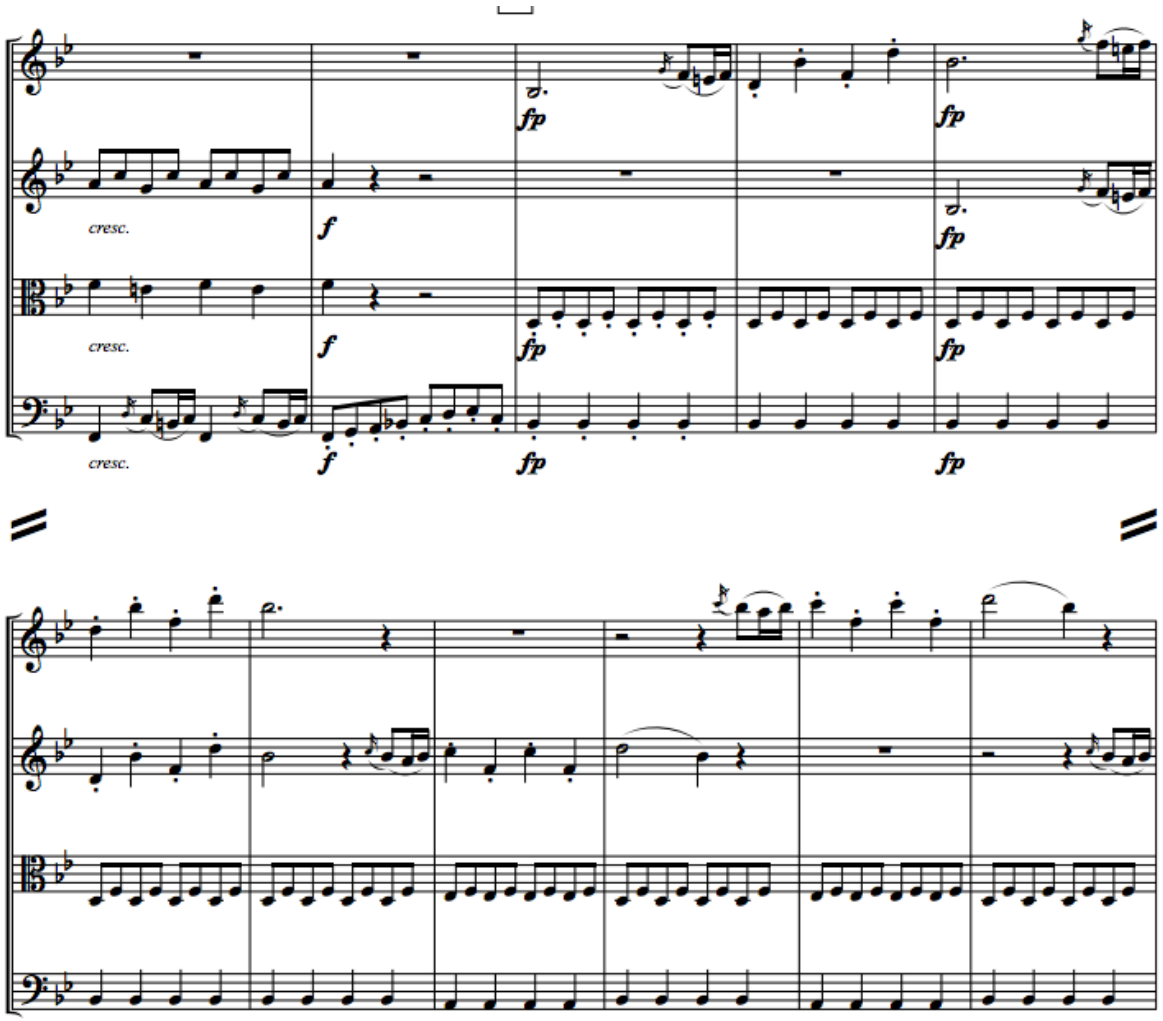


Op. 18, No. 6

Beethoven saved the most experimental and original work for the grand finale of his quartet set, No. 6 in B♭ major. The most original aspect of the quartet is seen mainly in the last

movement, *La Malinconia*, rather than the "standard" three movements that precede it. That does not mean, however, that there is little to talk about for the other movements, especially the first. The Allegro con brio opens with unison *fortepiano* and a first-violin theme answered promptly by the cello five measures later. The second violin and viola provide a stable harmony and steady rhythmical bass with eighth-note bass figures and ostinato quarter notes, respectively. Their

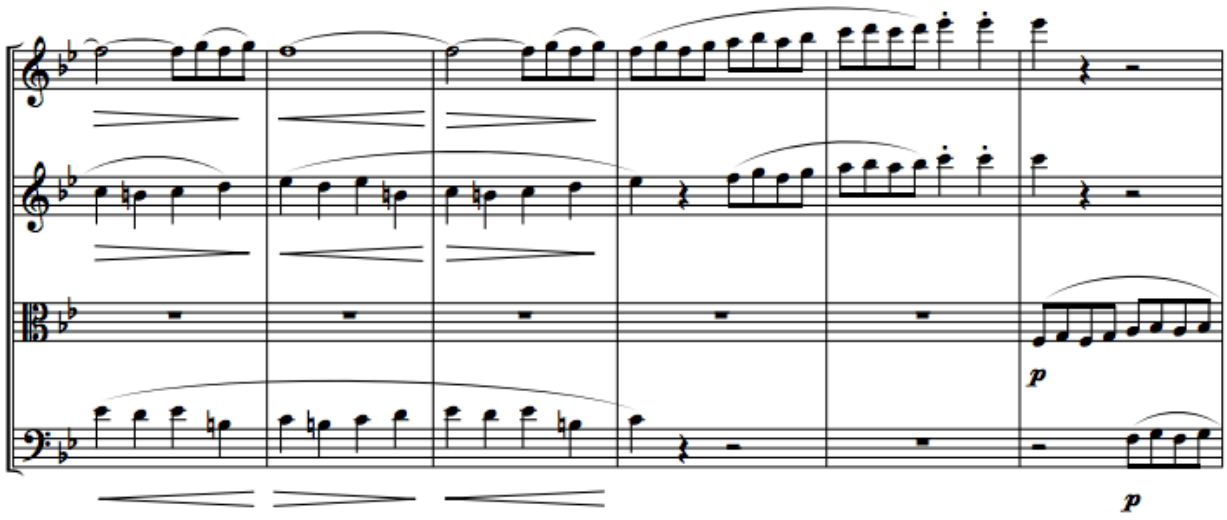
Example 5.5. Beethoven, Op. 18, No. 6, I, mm. 17–27



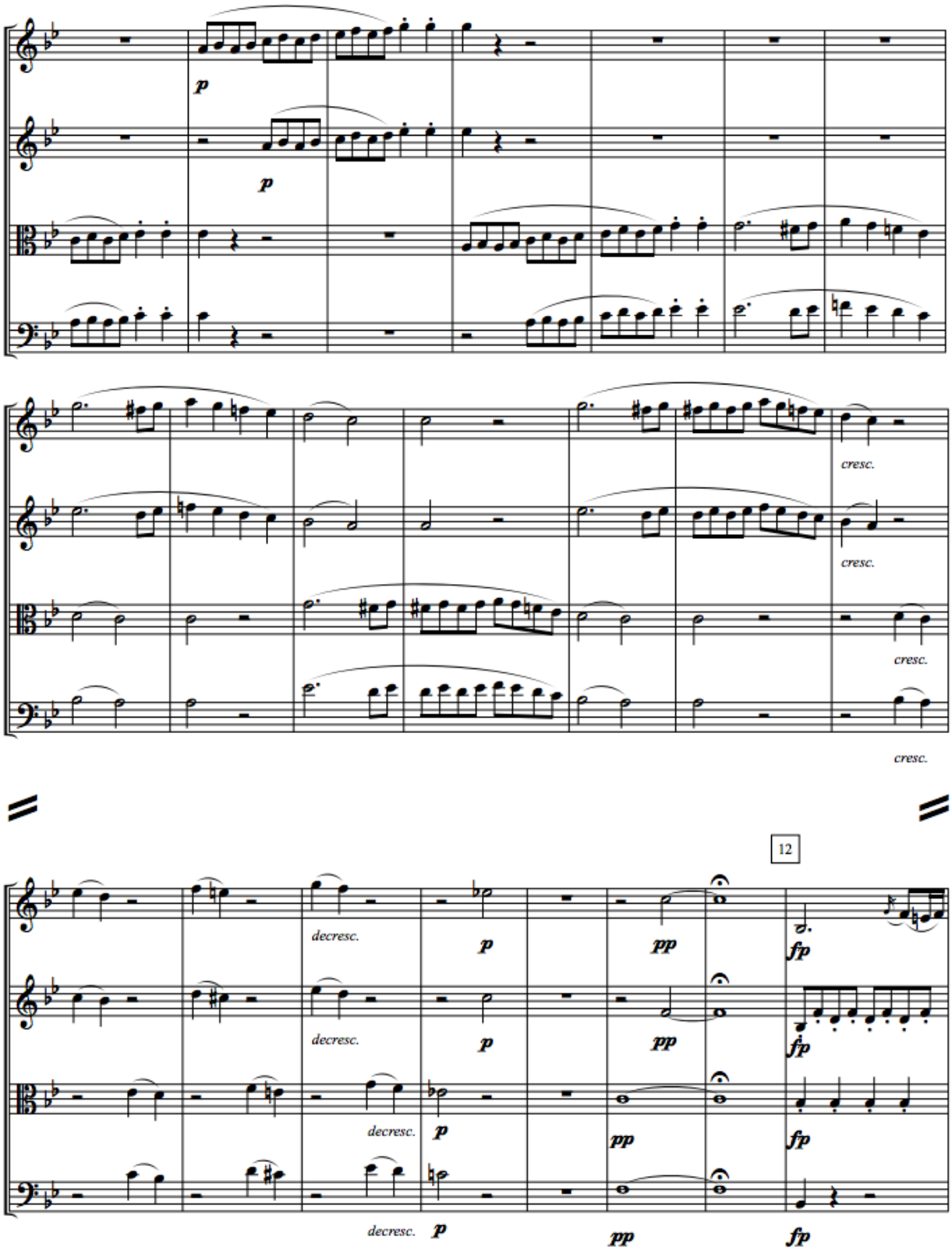
simple conversation, mostly *piano* and *pianissimo*, continues until a restatement of the theme in m. 19. This time, though, the conversation happens between the first and second violin, with the viola's eighth-note bass and cello's quarter-note bass (see Ex. 5.5).

After a spirited closing section in eighth-note scales ending in the dominant, the secondary theme follows a simple homophonic rhythmic passage with all four parts in that key. The development expands the conversational material of the opening with fragmented thematic motives spread among the two violins and viola, while the cello provides an unsettling, yet rhythmical, eighth-note bass. Then, after a startling silence, the solo cello begins a rising eighth-note scale in m. 113, the same material heard in the exposition, with the viola entering two measures later. From this point on, the first and second violins perform mostly as a pair, entering together in thirds in the last beats of m. 117, then in mm. 123 and 129. The pairing continues as the two violins perform in thirds during the dominant prolongation, also answered in a pair by viola and cello. The conversational exchange between the pairs of instruments continues until the primary theme returns in the recapitulation in m. 175 (see Ex. 5.6).

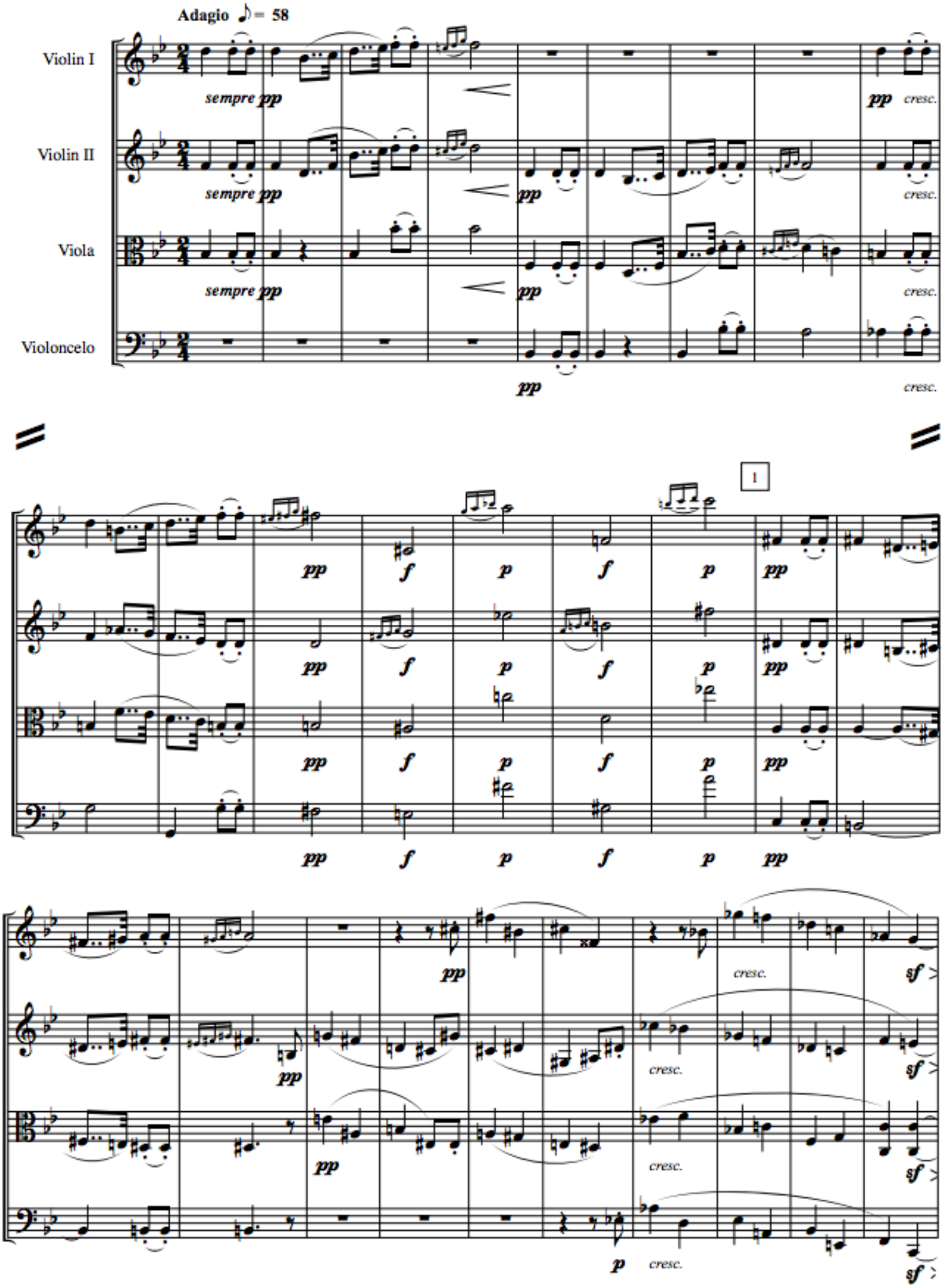
Example 5.6. Beethoven, Op. 18, No. 6, I, mm. 148–75



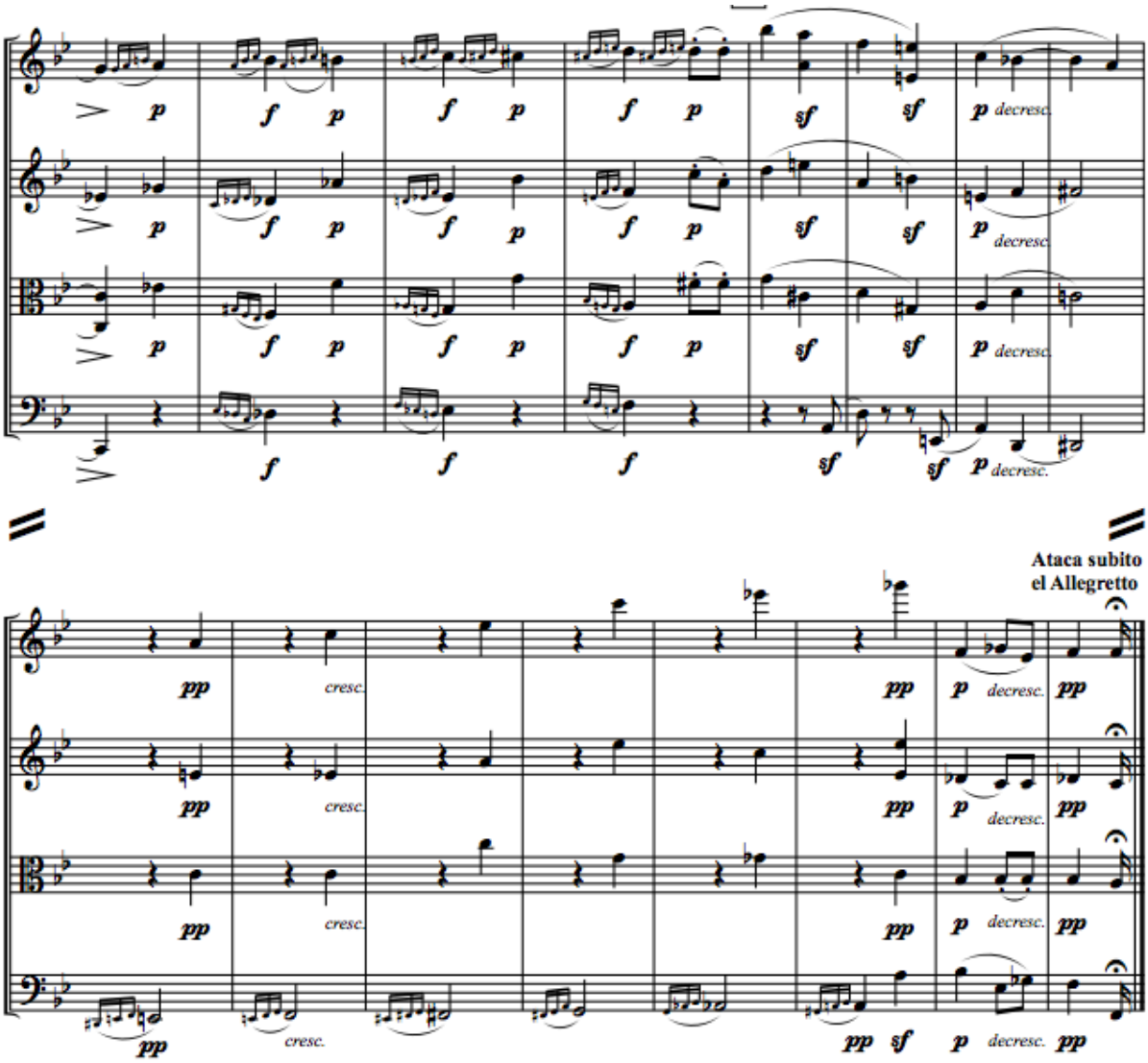
Example 5.6, Concluded



Example 5.7. Beethoven, Op. 18, No. 6, IV. *La Malinconia*



Example 5.7, Concluded



The Adagio opening of the final movement labeled *La Malinconia* is a forty-four-measure introduction to a relatively light and simple dance in 3/8 meter. *La Malinconia* is marked *Questo pezzo si deve trattare colla più gran delicatezza*, "This piece must be played with the greatest delicacy," the first title as well as the first detailed instructions in a movement in his

quartets.[88] More than just an introduction, this section is an essay that highlights learned compositional techniques, dynamic contrasts, and striking chromatic harmonies that contribute to making the movement the most original of the entire set (see Ex. 5.7).

The *sempre pianissimo* homorhythmic opening is a four-bar measure in B♭ major that excludes the cello. It is answered again by a trio of instruments, but this time the cello is included while the first violin remains tacit for four measures. What follows is a seemingly harmless repetition of the opening four-measure phrase; but as the cello holds on to an A♭ bass in m. 9, the "repetition" takes a mysterious harmonic twist. In fact, the A♭ bass note is part of a descending bass line that is preceded by B♭ and A (mm. 7–8) and continues downwards to G and F♯ (mm. 10–12). The descending chromatic scale turns in the opposite direction when F♯ is reached in m. 12, rising F♯–G–A–B–C in mm. 12–16. This ascending scale is in fact not in the bass, but shared between the first and second violins, using "disassociated registers … making a series of melodic 7ths and 9ths rather than plain upward steps."[89] The five-note ascending scale passage is emphasized even further by stark contrasts in dynamics—measure-by-measure alternation of *piano* and *forte*—as well as an unsettling chain of diminished-seventh chords.

The next section begins with fugue-like imitative entries initiated by the second violin. What sounds like a series of "hypnotic" imitative entries that aim to bring F♯ a seventh down to G is interrupted by a chromatic ascending scale from G to D, this time compacted to one register and one instrument, the first violin.[90] The scale, as before, is accentuated with turn figures and alternating *piano* and *forte* until another four measures of a harmonically unstable descending

88. Kerman, *Beethoven Quartets*, 76.
89. Ibid., 78.
90. Ibid., 79.

line is reached, similar to the downward line in mm. 26–29. A final chromatic ascending line occurs in the cello from D to A in mm. 35–42, rising not only in pitch but also dynamically from *pianissimo* to *fortissimo*, culminating in a shockingly dissonant A^{o7} chord punctuated with a *sforzando*. Afterwards, *La Malinconia* winds down to *subito piano* and then to *pianissimo* with a root-position B♭-minor chord to a second inversion B♭-minor chord and then finally an F-major chord (i–$i^{6/4}$–V).

In sum, *La Malinconia* may look deceivingly straightforward and even simple on paper, but it requires the most high-level sophisticated playing from each member of the quartet in order to express the emotional and harmonic extremes it possesses. Each instrument represents its own unique voice—doubling, harmonizing, or reinforcing each other's expressions; no part is less or more significant than the other. It is from Beethoven's faith in all the parts making their distinct and essential contribution to the whole that the string quartet as a genre, a medium, and a form could flourish and be revered for generations.

Op. 59, No. 2

As a loyal patron of the arts, the Russian ambassador, Count Andreas Razumovsky, had a profound impact on the musical scene in Vienna at the turn of the nineteenth century. He was an accomplished amateur violinist himself, even sponsoring his own in-house string quartet, in which he sometimes took the second violin seat.[91] The group known as the Razumovsky Quartet was one of the earliest examples of a professional string quartet, and included violinists Ignaz Schuppanzigh and Louis Sina, violist Franz Weiss, and cellist Joseph Linke.[92] Even though

91. Tully Potter, "From Chamber to Concert Hall," in *Cambridge Companion to the String Quartet*, 42–43.

92. Parker, *String Quartet,* 29, discusses three quartets groups that either because of their brief existence or constant change in membership were not able to establish themselves as a true professional string quartet. Their

Schuppanzigh was one of the most successful violinists of his time, Beethoven blatantly showed his dissatisfaction with the group's many difficulties in mastering the quartets, which were beyond the comprehension of his contemporaries.

> Even the men in the Schuppanzigh Quartet laughed (nervously, perhaps) at passages in the F-major piece and it was a complaint by their leader [Schuppanzigh] about this very composition that is supposed to have brought forth Beethoven's famous squelch: "Do you think I worry about your wretched fiddle when the spirit speaks to me?"[93]

Nevertheless, Schuppanzigh remained a good friend of Beethoven, and the Razumovsky Quartet premiered many of Beethoven's string quartets, including the Op. 59 set.[94]

In 1806, Count Razumovsky commissioned Beethoven to compose string quartets with Russian folk songs incorporated in them. The compositions materialized as the three quartets of Op. 59, now known as the "Razumovsky" quartets.[95] These are pivotal works of Beethoven's middle period alongside such others as the Eroica Symphony No. 3 (Op. 55, 1803) and Symphony No. 5 (Op. 67, 1804–08). As was the convention, Count Razumovsky retained the manuscripts of the three Op. 59 quartets for one year before their publication. The highly anticipated "new" quartets of Beethoven were even mentioned in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung,* the most famous musical journal from that time from Leipzig, months before their release to the public.[96]

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members included players such as Pietro Nardini and Luigi Boccherini who performed in Milan in 1765, the Font family in Madrid, and the quartet-in-residence at Esterhàzy where Luigi Tomasini served as first violin.

93. Kerman, *Beethoven Quartets*, 119.

94. Ibid., 43.

95. A *thème russe* appears in only two of the three quartets: the finale of No. 1 and the trio of the third movement in No. 2.

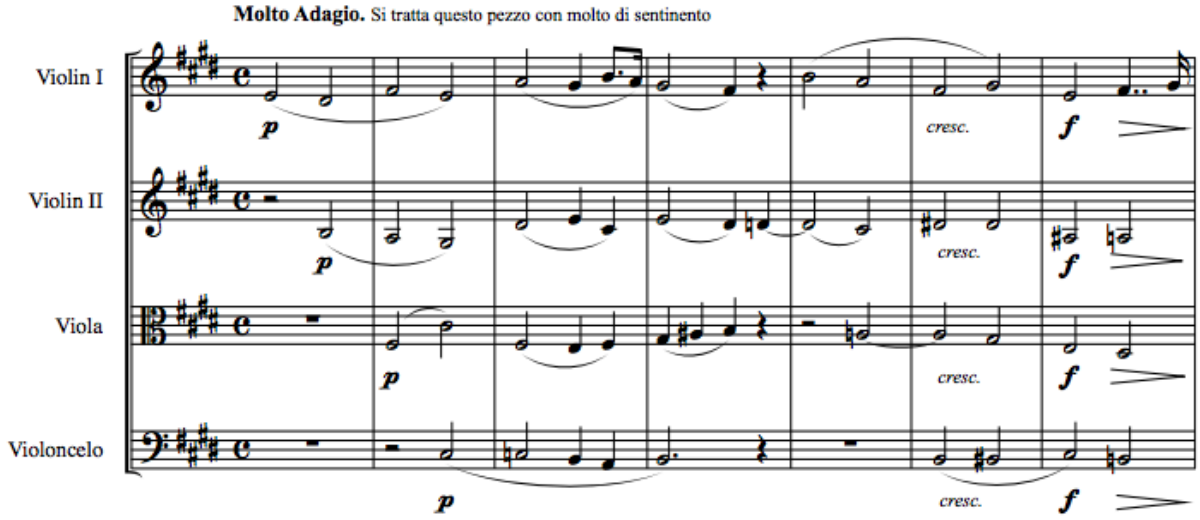
96. "In Vienna Beethoven's newest, difficult but substantial quartets are giving ever more pleasures; amateurs hope to see them soon in print." *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung,* May 1807, quoted and translated in Jones, "Beethoven and the Viennese Legacy," 219. "Three new, very long, and difficult Beethoven quartets … are attracting the attention of all connoisseurs. They are profoundly thought and admirably worked out, but not to be grasped by all" (*AmZ*, early 1807). Quoted and translated in Steinberg's "Notes on the Quartets," 176.

In all three quartets, Beethoven incorporates fugues in one movement, each time a little grander than in the preceding work. Whether this displays his compositional mastery or perhaps even the "spirit speaking" to him as he put it, the fugues demand great virtuosic artistry from all four instruments—individually and unified—which is especially true of the final movement of C-major quartet, No. 3. Beethoven also takes all four voices to their highest artistic endeavor in another way: through a sophisticated system of balance—the balance of voicing, dynamics, and thematic distribution—as exemplified in the slow movement of the E-minor quartet.

Op. 59, No. 2 is unique among the three, and indeed among all his string quartets, in having all the movements centered on a single tonal center, in this case E. Although the second movement and the trio of the third movement are in E major, the rest of the work is set in E minor. The second movement, Molto Adagio, is inscribed *Si tratta questo pezzo con molto di sentimento*, "This is a piece with a lot of feeling." Indeed, the movement flows from one theme to the next continuously, often over elided cadences. Seemingly never-ending themes compel the players, as well as the listeners, to hold tight onto the thread of emotion the music stirred in them from the beginning until a moment of closure is met, no matter how brief it may be. Perhaps for Beethoven, who was inspired to write this movement while "contemplating the starry sky and thinking of the music of the spheres," the continuous flow of themes was a way of realizing the vast sky and the heavens in music.[97]

97. Thayer, *Life of Beethoven,* Vol. 2, 75.

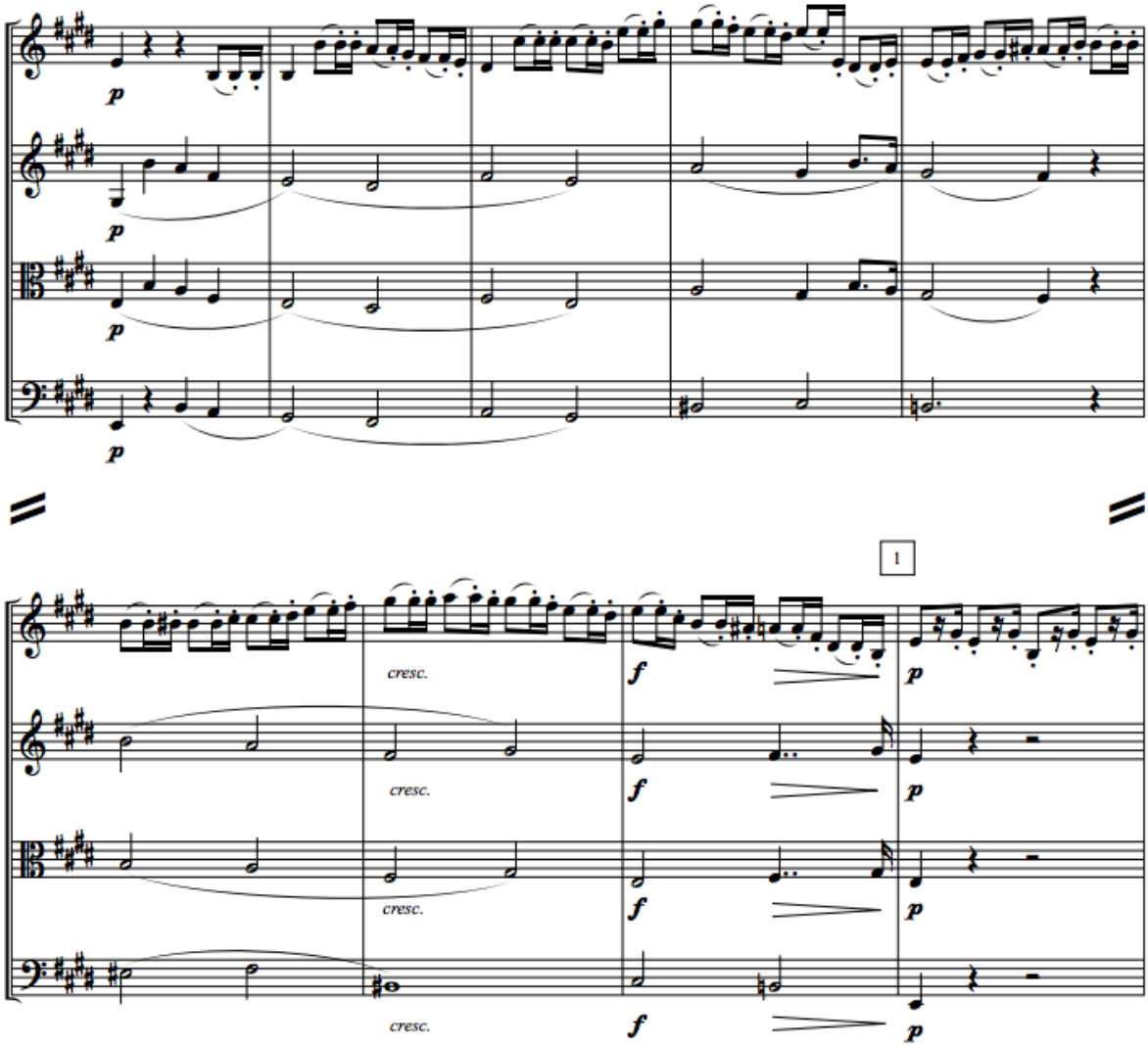
Example 5.8. Beethoven, Op. 59, No. 2, II, mm. 1–7



The movement opens with a solemn hymn-like theme (first primary theme, or P1) that lasts for eight measures. Although composed in common time, the first phrase is heard as a slow *alla breve* since all instruments move mostly in half notes (see Ex. 5.8). The staggered piano entrance of the instruments— the first violin with the theme alone, joined by the second violin two beats later, then the viola in the next measure with the last cello entrance at the end of the second measure—requires each player to find a subliminal balance so as not to draw too much attention to their own "new" entrance and not break the breadth of the phrase that the previous player has created.[98] At the same time, one needs to find enough substance to sustain the rich harmony in support of the ongoing theme.

98. Similar entrance technique is used again in his later quartets. Most similar is the first movement of Op. 132, *Assai sostenuto,* with staggered entrances from the bottom up (cello–viola–second violin–first violin) that lasts for eight measures. The third movement of the same quartet, the Molto Adagio known more famously as the "*Heiliger Dankgesang,"* also opens with a chorale-like introduction, which begins with the first violin and moves to the bottom, but it is much longer at thirty measures.

Example 5.9. Beethoven, Op. 59, No. 2, II, mm. 8–16



Then, from mm. 9–16, P1 moves to the second violin, while the first violin introduces a new and contrasting texture with rhythmic long–short figures (see Ex. 5.9), which could easily be considered accompanimental. In this movement, however, several issues arise to question the

accompaniment label of these long–short figures and, in truth, there is sizeable evidence for labeling them as "countersubject."[99]

The first issue is its placement in the first violin. Although it is not rare for the first violin to assume an accompanimental role while the other instruments take the spotlight, it is still worth noting that this figure was given to the first violin rather than the second. Moreover, just after the long–short figures have cadenced in the tonic, a dotted-figure accompaniment begins immediately. Why would Beethoven take such painstaking measures to differentiate the two rhythmical figures when they are in effect virtually the same rhythm? Moreover, even though P1 lies with the second violin and viola, what grasps the listener's attention is the mostly stepwise long–short rhythm of the first violin. As Hunter writes, "the accompaniment figure draws what feels like disproportionate attention to itself."[100] The steady rise and fall of the long–short notes, with captivating harmonic support underneath—the high G in m. 11 and 14 ($vii^{\circ 7}$/vi and $V^{6/5}$/vi, respectively) both resolving to the submediant—are what catch the ear and make the listener pay attention to them until they arrive at their proper resolutions. Lastly, even though there is the rhythmic similarity between the long–short notes and the dotted figure that follows (with sixteenth-note rest between the notes), the tie between the eighth note and the first sixteenth note indicates that the long note must "sound" long before coming to the staccato marking on the tied-over sixteenth note.[101] This marking informs the sophisticated first violinist to make a micro-second silence of the staccato note to come after the tied-over note, not before, as with the dotted-note figures of m. 16 and onward.

99. Hunter, "Most Interesting," 69, refers to Gerd Indorf's label of "countersubject."
100. Ibid., 67–68.
101. Ibid., 68.

Despite all the analysis of the countersubject, it is still important to shift our attention to the reiteration of the theme, this time with the second violin and viola in unison with the cello bass. From m. 9 onward, P1 has lost its initial *alla breve* pulse with the entrance of the rhythmic first violin. The effect of combining the subdivided notes over the slow-moving half notes deceives the ear into hearing the theme as twice as slow as its original version, even though they have the exact same duration. What is remarkable about this section is that the subdivisions do not break up the theme into shorter pulses, but through Beethoven's artistry, the broad, expansive nature of the theme is sustained and is evermore present because it is fortified with one more instrument. Here, Beethoven is breaking ground yet again in territory little explored by his predecessors in the string-quartet repertoire by placing the theme as well as the long–short countersubject together, creating a sublime balance of the two "melodies" sounding simultaneously.[102]

After a tonic cadence in m. 16, a genuine accompanimental figure begins with dotted rhythms in the first violin, carrying one measure by itself. Then, a brief, second primary theme, P2, is added to the texture in m. 17 by the second violin before moving on to the transitional material. Although the dotted rhythm seamlessly transfers from the first to the second violin in m. 21, the first statement of it is given to the second violin. Meanwhile, during the recapitulation, P2 begins on an evaded cadence of P1, and this time, it is lengthened to eight measures instead of the six measures of the exposition. The cello has the dotted-rhythm accompaniment throughout while the three upper instruments enter with different variations on P2. The beautiful, high-pitched iteration of P2 is that of the second violin, set in a higher register than the first violin. In

102. This is different from a fugue's subject and countersubject occurring at the same time and is closer in resemblance to the slow movement of Mozart's K. 590 of the filigree sixteenth-note runs that occur alongside the chorale-like theme.

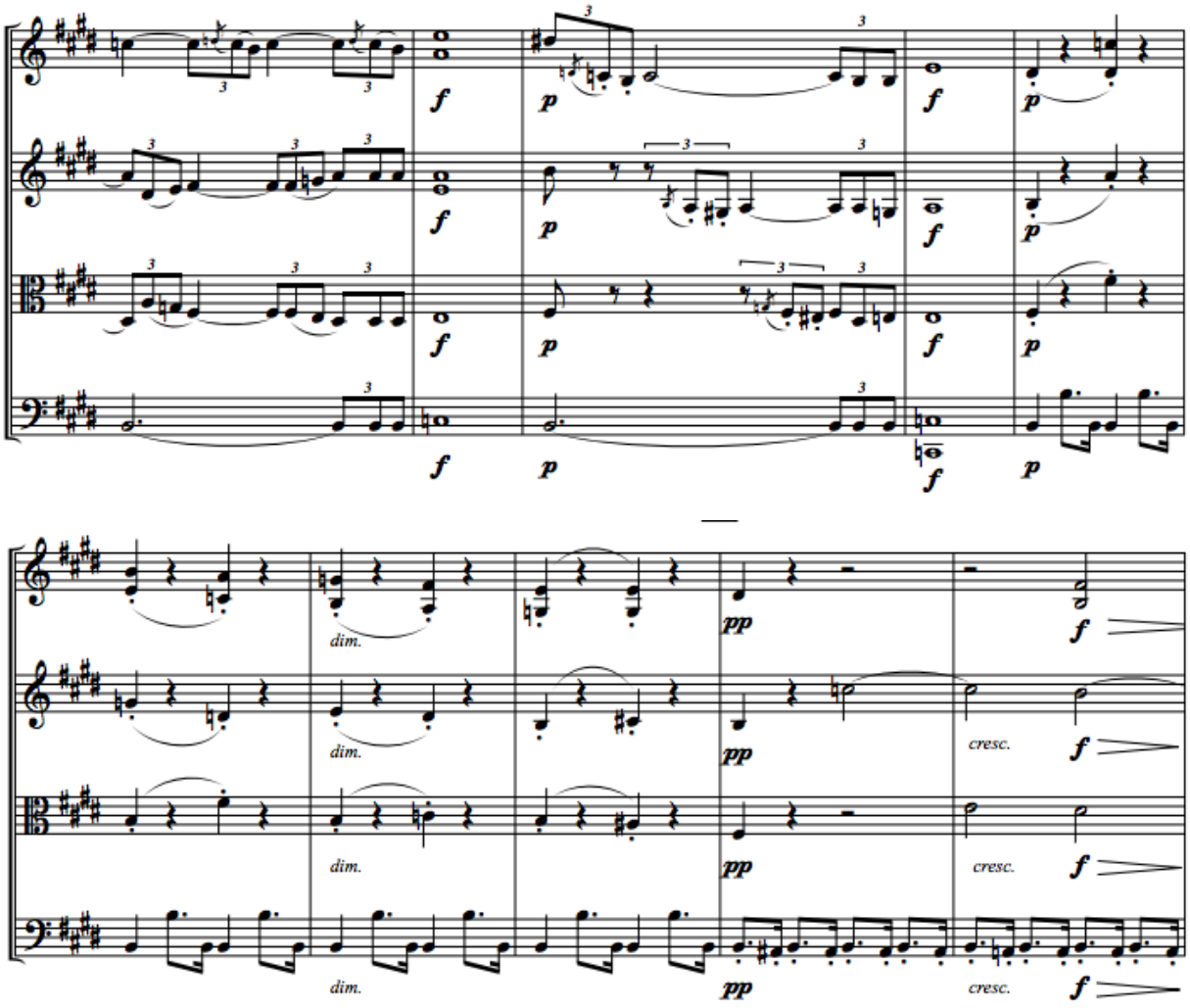
fact, the second violin is continuing what it has been doing since the start of the recapitulation: that is, to stay above all the instruments, including the first violin's P1.

The unremarkable arrival of the recapitulation, despite the necessary retransition or dominant prolongation being there, was foreshadowed by the unstable minor subdominant chords (iv^6 in mm. 76 and 78), sustained for a whole measure each time, creating uneasiness in an otherwise subdued section. The culprit for anxiety makes one more appearance as a C-natural suspension in the second violin resolves to B natural ($^{\flat}6$–5) in mm. 83–84 (see Ex. 5.10). Subsequently, when the dominant resolution moves into a tonic recapitulation in m. 85 without warning, again on an evaded cadence, it is no surprise that the listener is caught off guard to hear the first violin playing P1. As a matter of fact, upon initial hearing, it is difficult to recognize exactly when P1 begins. In subsequent hearings, however, one may concentrate hard and catch that very moment when the first violin enters with P1. The difficulty in making out P1 in the recapitulation is because the ear is still holding onto the second violin's B-natural resolution from the measure before. As the second violin continues to soar above all the other instruments in suspended notes, one has to follow its line.

There is also the matter of the long–short figures, played by the cello, seemingly stemming from the dotted-rhythm accompaniment two measures before the recapitulation (mm. 83–84). This time, though, the long–short figures do not surface as countersubject-worthy but stay accompanimental. This is partly thanks to their organic emergence from the dotted-rhythm before and the low register, but mostly because of what is going on above them. As mentioned before, the second violin's tied-over notes "[soaring] in descant above the first violin's hymn,"

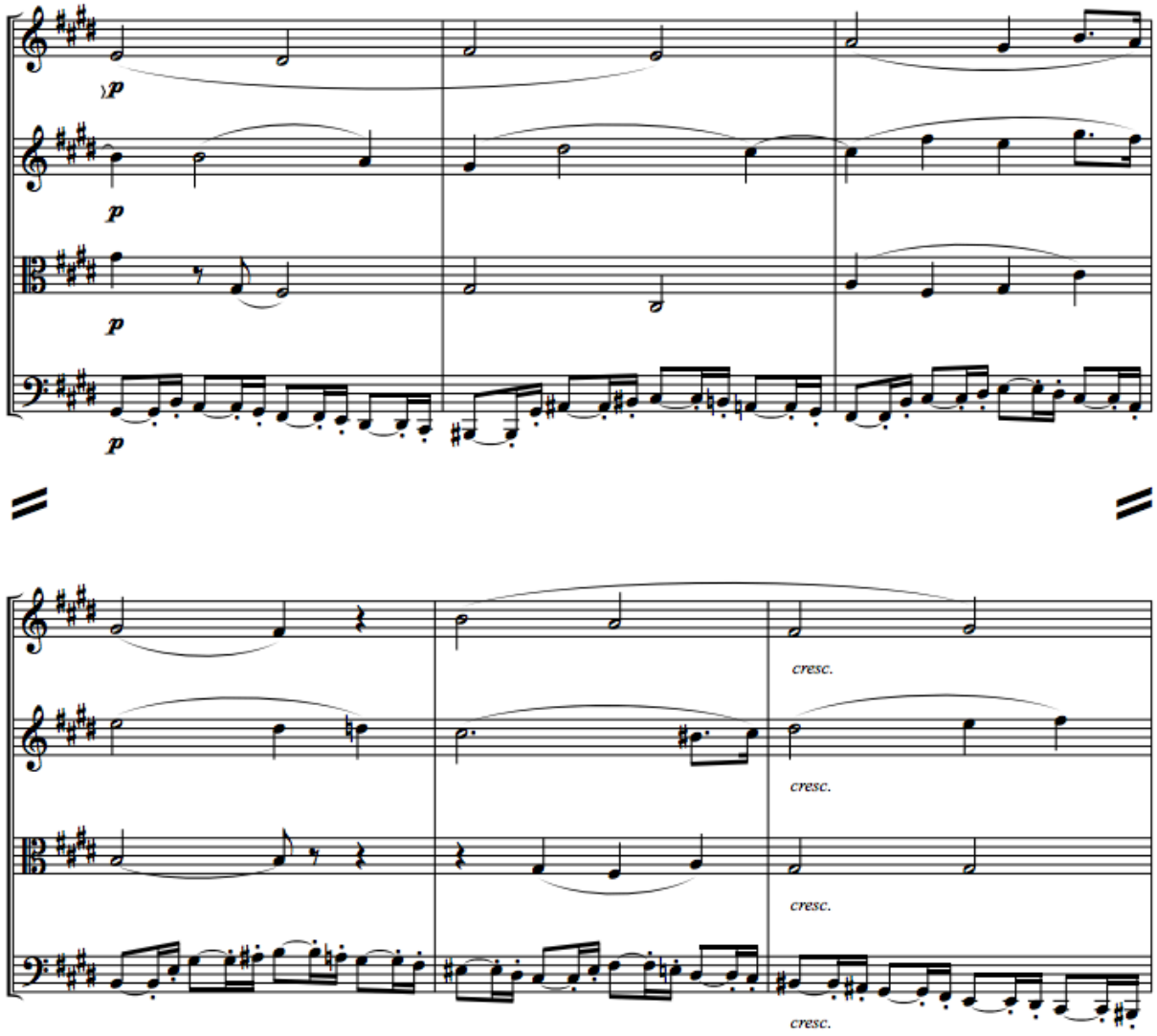
create the most sublime moment in this entire movement, which Steinberg describes as "a miracle."[103]

Example 5.10. Beethoven, Op. 59, No. 2, II, mm. 75–90



103. Steinberg, "Notes on the Quartets," 287.

Example 5.10, Concluded



Unlike the string quartet's earlier days, Beethoven's consumption of the four instruments was not born out of the needs of the players (amateur and professional alike) and performance locales. Rather, he utilized the parts as though they each owned a teleological presence throughout the musical discourse and gave them the fertile grounds on which to flourish that were built on layers and layers of expansive formal areas (especially within the sonata form),

harmonically–rich key areas, and the sheer beauty of texture and sound. From the onset of Op. 18 string quartets to his middle period Op. 59 quartets, Beethoven demonstrated an extraordinary capacity as a composer who not only exhibited profound knowledge of the string quartet repertoire that came before him, but as a visionary who most significantly contributed to the growing new attitude toward string quartets as an object of study.

Conclusion

I began this thesis with the question, "why is the second violin part of certain early string quartets easier than the first violin part, and frequently inferior to it, musically and technically?" which later changed to "What constitutes a good string quartet?" The string quartet is a unique genre that encompasses many ideals: the learned, the conversational, equality, and individuality, among others. There have been scores of quartets in which the composers try out one or more of their beliefs about what a true string quartet should sound like; some with great success, and some not so much. Centuries later, students in music schools, learning and studying these string quartets, are careful to select—if their teacher has not already done the selection—which pieces they will spend their precious time analyzing, practicing, and rehearsing. Then there is the issue of choosing a piece that will satisfy all four players of the group. Students are also limited by time (and interest) in becoming acquainted with the diverse repertoire that string quartets have to offer; in reality, there is not even enough time to learn all of the "great" quartets.

Generally speaking, everyone wants to play a part that has lots of notes, preferably with many melodic lines, and various shining moments during the course of music. When a part lacks luster and virtuosity, it is all too easily cast off as characterless and boring. But through this research, I have learned that what makes the string quartet "great" and "true," is *not* one's virtuosity at the sacrifice of the others, or the mastery of this composer over another, but the physical music making of four different individuals, coming together in their love and celebration of music. It is true that the second-violin part, as well as the viola and cello, will sometimes seem monotonous and accompanimental in comparison with the first violin, especially from music belonging to the early days of the string quartet. However, simpler parts

for the three lower strings were a necessary component to the development of string quartets, as they accommodated the amateur instrumentalists who would actually be playing them. That these amateur musicians complained of their rather modest parts is doubtful; they were most certainly happy to be making music with others, especially when they had a professional first violinist next to them. Perhaps if it were not for the amateur players, the development of string quartets as a genre may have suffered a setback as their interest and love of making music are what gave rise to the genre's popularity. The high demand for string quartets in private, domestic settings, in turn, prompted numerous composers to exercise their most sophisticated compositional skills in writing string quartets.

Gradually, in the quartets of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven, we began to see a shift of roles within the four players. More weight is given to instruments other than the first violin; and the inner parts become less and less for the amateur but fit for professionally trained and highly skilled musicians. The evolution of the three lower strings, particularly the second violin, is remarkable: from its monotonous, doubling, amateur days to attention-seeking, theme-bearing, indispensable "professional" parts worthy of considerable research and analysis.

It is my hope that this paper can motivate musicians to appreciate and enjoy the early string quartets for what they are and where they belonged in the history; and also find joy in the extraordinary transformation that string quartets underwent in the masterful hands of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.

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